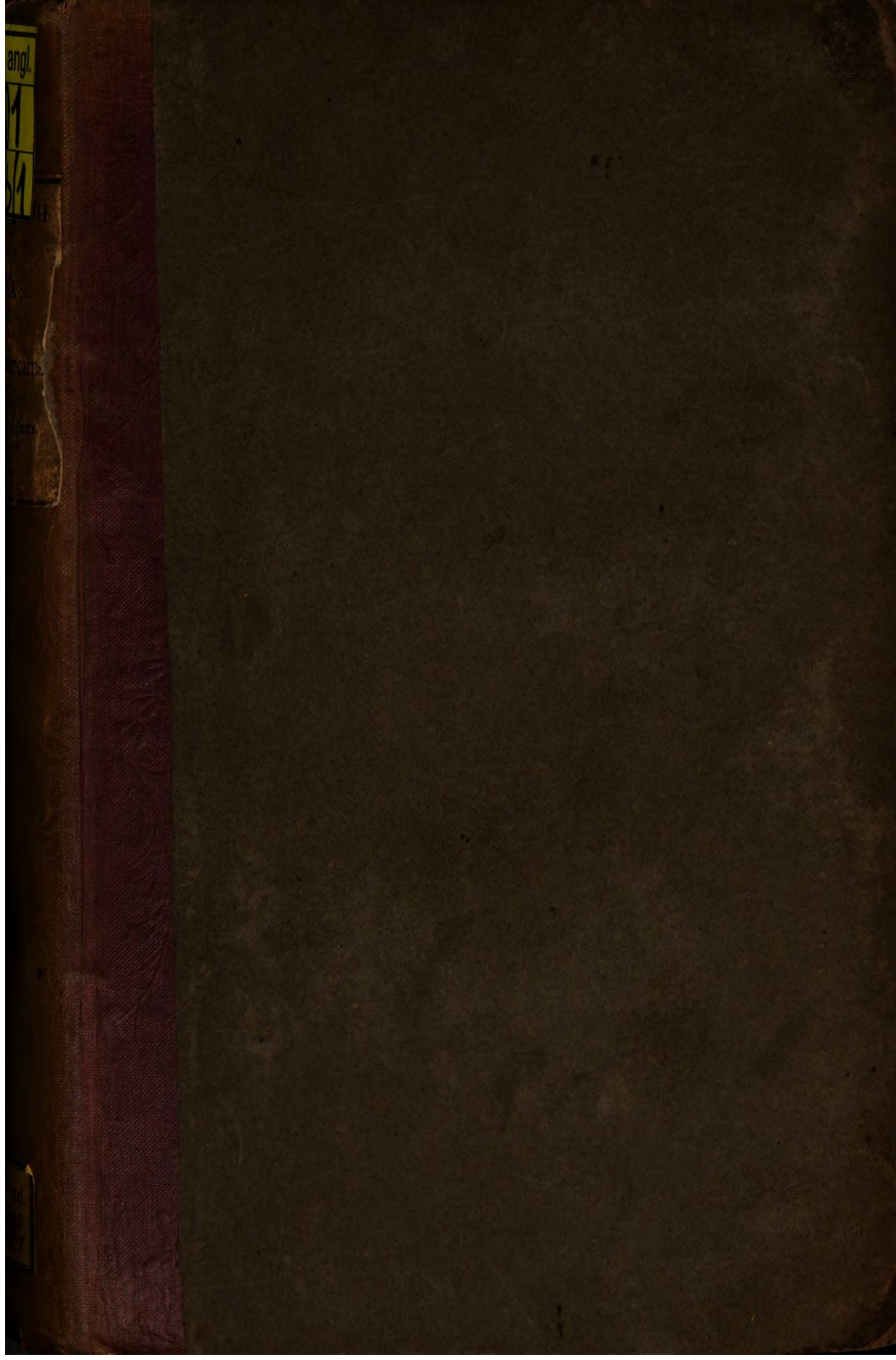






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THE
ENGLISH IN INDIA.

AND
OTHER SKETCHES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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THE
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BY

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VOL. I.

THE
ENGLISH IN INDIA.

AND
OTHER SKETCHES.

BY A TRAVELLER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

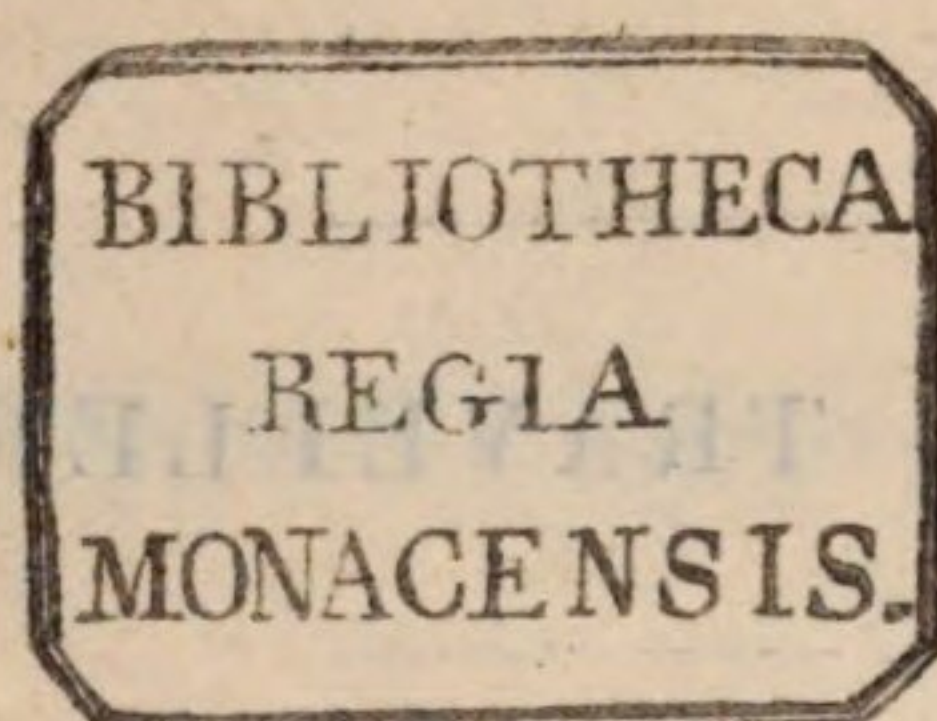
LONDON:

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND
LONGMAN,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCXXXV.

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P R E F A C E.

IN the first of the following sketches,—for they are no more,—I have aimed rather at describing character than relating events. I have endeavoured to pourtray the English in India as they really exist,—such as my own experience found them. Educated, for the greater part, in England, and forming in the East a society almost exclusively British, it is evident that they cannot exhibit differences of feeling, and scarcely of habit, so marked as some imagine. Such peculiarities as do exist, I have endeavoured to paint in these pages by the medium chiefly of conversations, in which the speakers are made to elucidate themselves. If there are some portraitures, my friends in India are good-natured enough to forgive them. “MRS. HUGGINS” is an individual belonging to a

peculiar species,—a woman born in India,—a Hindoo-briton,—possessing some natural wit and shrewdness, but no more education than is attainable at a Calcutta boarding-school,—that is, just sufficient to pervert the gifts of Nature. I do not suppose that any author, wishing to obtain credit for the truth and keeping of his portraiture, would have drawn on his invention so far as to *imagine* such an one amongst the leaders of a society which at least affects to be highly cultivated. My assertion, therefore, may be the more readily believed, when I assure the reader, that the person whose eccentricities I have attempted to paint under the name of “Mrs. Huggins,” is so generally known in the Mo-fussil, or up-country stations, as to render her character public property. I have not invaded the territories of domestic life, by the unworthy expedient of relating anecdotes of her private career. She has exhibited herself,—and is daily painted by others,—in colours ten-fold stronger than those I have used, and she is not likely to be either wounded or annoyed by the portraiture.

The other Indian sketches are *vrais* if not *vraisemblables*. The character of AHALYA BAE is so worthy of admiration, that I do not apologize for my copious extract from the laborious work of Sir John Malcolm, since the readers of these volumes will probably consist, for the greater part, of those to whom his elaborate history would be inaccessible, or by whom it would be passed over as too profound.

Whilst the manners of the fashionable world are described or caricatured on all sides, and by the pen of almost every novelist,—whilst our villages glow beneath the brilliant and bewitching pencil of Miss Mitford,—little comparatively is known of our provincial towns. Manufacture and trade produce but indifferent heroes and heroines, but they form an important feature in our social condition. In “KNIGHTHOOD” I have endeavoured to see what could be made of such a subject; and, should my sketch prove a failure, I can only wish that the pen of a Miss Austen had been employed on it, since it is undoubtedly one that deserves to be illustrated.

21st OCTOBER, 1834.

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THE
ENGLISH IN INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

MY DEAR MRS. ALBANY,

YOUR letter gave me twofold pleasure. It sent back my heart and my mind to the bright days of youth and hope when we were girls together, and I was obliged to look at my daughter before I could return to the conviction that, with me, spring has departed and autumn is even more than approaching. But I enjoyed also a pleasure that had a less fanciful source. I had the solid satisfaction of receiving your assurance, that I have been at least kindly remembered during the long years of separation,—the total cessation of correspondence. It is not now for us to discuss

with whom lay that fault, or whether it is not to be attributed to the thousand accidents of human life; I have only to be grateful to our friend, Captain Hall, that he was careful to enumerate us amongst his pleasant acquaintances in India, since he was able to add the information of our present whereabouts. I lose no time in replying to your enquiries regarding our plans, and begin by informing you that, after much deliberation, Colonel Middleton and myself have arrived at the conclusion that, for the sake of our four children, our return to India will be prudent, and *therefore* incumbent on us.

It was not with quite so little hesitation that we have decided on taking out our eldest daughter. It is true, that we have long been familiar with the contemplation of such a possibility, but when the time for acting arrived, we felt the deep responsibility of fixing thus her future destination, and I am persuaded that if we could, in common prudence, have relinquished all thoughts of returning to India, we should have done so, when we came to con-

template resolutely all that must be encountered—all that must be relinquished—by our beloved child. But we have no right to inflict poverty on our four daughters, having in our power, on certain conditions, the means of providing for them. Our connexions, as you are aware, are scattered over India, and there are none in England to whom we could intrust our girls' introduction into life, or who would undertake it. Moreover, it is a hard trial to a mother's heart to devolve on another its dearest, its most sacred duties; and I confess mine shrank, when I ventured but to dream of undergoing it. That conflict, however, I was spared, and our child will, at least, have the advantage of going out to India under the happiest auspices. None of those unpleasant reflections which attach to young women who make the voyage on speculation, can apply to our darling Florence, for it is natural and proper that her father's home should be hers. She will also be under our own protection during the voyage, which is never, *morally* I mean, the least dangerous part of a girl's career. Thus two

formidable evils will be avoided at the outset—that of being in an India-bound ship unprotected, and of being classed, on her arrival, amongst speculating *adventuresses* bent on matrimony.

In answer to your inquiries “what kind of education we have thought best for our daughter,” and consequently what we have given, let me assure you that it has always been the aim of her father and myself, to qualify her for becoming the companion and the friend of a sensible man, rather than for shining the star of a ball-room. The amiable and excellent woman to whose care, from the age of seven to fourteen,—(the last four years she has been under my own eye)—she was confided, has entered fully into our plans. That utility should be preferred, on all occasions, to ornament, has been the fundamental rule we have always regarded. Accomplishments have not been neglected, but they have been subordinate to more solid attainments. A love of reading has been sedulously encouraged, and the tastes implanted in her mind, have insured a preference for reading

of the very best—I might almost say, the *highest* description. A woman whose mind has no independent resources, must necessarily be a frivolous being anywhere; but in India, doubly so. There her occupations must pre-eminently be made by herself, and to escape from the prevalent errors of the society, she must be superior to it. Above all, every possible exertion has been made to strengthen her mind, to place sensibility under the control of reason, and to curb imagination by judgment. All this, if you retain your early characteristics, will be deemed by you very cold and calculating. You would have had me cherish the enthusiasm and tenderness which were very early discovered by her parents and her instructress, as the natural bias of her mind, instead of giving it a contrary impulse. Where we have controlled, you would have encouraged. Above all, we have endeavoured to strengthen that fortitude which is the peculiar gift of heaven to woman. Human life, in its brightest aspect, presents sufficient

evils to render moral courage useful—perhaps absolutely necessary, and in an Indian career, pitiable, indeed, is the being who has it not. *Au reste*, for if I wrote longer on this theme, a mother's partiality, and self-love would glide from description into panegyric,—my child is an affectionate daughter, a warm and faithful friend, an agreeable companion, but not that, which in days of yore you held in especial abhorrence—a philosopher in petticoats.

I shall not apologize for my long letter of details, because your question could not be answered without them. I conclude your motive was stronger than mere curiosity; and I shall only add my anxious wish to be useful to you in any way you can point out, and assure you that my husband tenders you his best services, if, as we suspect, you entertain a design of sending any part of your family to India. &c. &c. &c.

The reply to this letter was of such a tenor as to induce Colonel and Mrs. Middleton to

accept, without hesitation, the invitation it conveyed, that they would spend a week with Mrs. Albany at her house in Hertfordshire.

—“Well, what do you think of her?” said Mrs. Albany, when on the night of the arrival of her guests, she and Mrs. Middleton had retired to the dressing-room of the latter, for the sake of an hour’s gossip.

“That she is quite pretty enough to be admired anywhere,” was the reply.

“Now that is so measured, my dear creature,” said Mrs. Albany, with an air of disappointment. “Pretty!—a word I hate in all its applications. Pretty women are my aversion. I hoped you would distinguish my girl by an epithet somewhat more energetic.”

“I can say, with perfect sincerity, that I think her a most lovely and attractive young woman.”

“That is better, since I cannot extort *beautiful* from you, on which I had quite set my heart. I cannot, however, measure my sentiments by your rule, and I confess, I consider your little Florence a complete beauty.”

"By no means," said Mrs. Middleton, quietly. "On the contrary, most persons seeing the two girls together, would I think, at first sight, be dazzled by Miss Albany's more brilliant person."

"Do you think so?" said the ambitious mother, eagerly. "But why at first sight?"

"Because, since you cross-examine me so closely, as much of the charms of Florence, to my apprehension, depends on countenance, she improves on acquaintance, whereas, in most cases of beauty, familiarity weakens the impression. You may look into her eyes until you forget both their colour and their form."

"I shall content myself with the certainty that no *man* will be likely to forget that Harriet's are both dark and brilliant," said Mrs. Albany, rather piqued. "However, such as she is, do you think she is likely to marry well in India?"

"Without the slightest reservation, *yes*. But yet with your means——"

"I know all you would say—all you would urge and object," interrupted Mrs. Albany,

hurriedly; “but do me the justice to believe I would not voluntarily undergo such a separation from my child, if I did not consider it a duty to *her*. My income is only a life-income. I have two other girls to establish in the world. Harriet is three and twenty;—I have given her every possible advantage of dress and society;—I have exhibited her everywhere, — London, Brighton, Bath, Cheltenham,—but I don’t know how it is,—though admired by all the world, she has had no proposals which she could, in common prudence, accept; she has had no opportunity of effecting a suitable establishment. Now my brother’s offer to receive her in India, holds out every possible temptation. You know how ready an admission into the very first circles of India, his introduction will procure for her.”

“It will,” said Mrs. Middleton, but she smiled.

“How desirable,” continued Mrs. Albany, unmindful of that smile, which, after all, might mean nothing, “young men in that country

will deem an alliance with the Resident of Kirkpore."

"Undoubtedly."

"And the singular good fortune which secures her such a protectress as yourself during the voyage, removes every objection that prudence might urge against the plan, which, to its other advantages, adds the prospective one, of being some sort of security for the ultimate establishment of my remaining children. At least, her house will afford them a home in the event of my death, and that certainty will greatly alleviate my anxiety regarding their future provision, portionless as they will be."

The days passed rapidly away, as they always do when an important event is to take place at a particular period. The hour of parting approached, and Mrs. Albany's maternal sensibilities were naturally excited in a painful degree. Indeed, Mrs. Middleton suggested that, for the sake of supporting her daughter's fortitude, she should endeavour to restrain their exhibition, if she could not subdue them. Mrs.

Albany professed herself utterly unequal to such an exertion of self-command, and continued to the last moment to mingle her parting counsels with hysterical attacks so violent, that Mrs. Middleton silently wondered how an evil which might have been averted at the expense of some self-denial, should ever have been permitted to occur.

—“You are not a child, my Harriet,” said the weeping mother; “you have seen the world, and know very well there is no living in it without possessing its comforts, and some of its luxuries,—without being able, in fact, to support as good a style as one’s neighbours. You have certainly outlived all foolish notions of love and that kind of thing, if you ever had them. I send you to India”—the tears of the speaker fell faster,—“with only one object in view, to marry as advantageously as possible. The greater the wealth, the higher the rank of your husband, the sooner will you be able to return to England, which, after all, is the place to enjoy life. Do not condemn yourself to a long exile for the sake of indulging

any romantic preference. To be sure I have no right to suspect you of such egregious folly ; I am certain my darling Harriet will act prudently. You will remember, love, how very much depends on your effecting a proper marriage : to say nothing of your own advantage, the prospects of your sisters depend on it."

Miss Albany arranged her curls, and wiped the tears from her glittering eyes. " Rely on me, my dear mamma," she said with an affectionate embrace. " As you truly observe, though certainly young, in manner as well as years, I am not a child ; I know the value of the world, and its good things. But talking of youth, I do not think any rational person would take me for Miss Middleton's senior,—do you, mamma ? "

" Nobody, my best love, if she had a little of your finished air."

" Upon the whole, mamma, I like the girl very well, but I suspect the voyage under the *surveillance* of Mrs. Middleton, will be rather a dull affair."

“ Oh, my dear, she is an excellent creature, and then her experience must be of the highest possible advantage to you. From the moment you enter the vessel, you may be said to commence your Indian career, and an auspicious outset is, you know, of the very last importance.”

“ Well—well—as there *is* no help for it, I suppose it must be endured. But do allow, dearest mamma, that this beloved friend of yours is rather stately and austere,—in short, so precise, so unlike you, that one cannot but wonder how anything approaching to friendship ever could have existed between you.”

“ I confess it *is* a matter of surprise even to myself. But, as Byron says, ‘ ’twas accident, blind contact, and the strong necessity of loving’ something, and I was her uncle’s ward, you know, and really her discretion saved me from a great deal of folly,—a silly match,—and a ladder of ropes,—and that kind of thing. Oh, my dear love, *do* remember my parting injunctions,—marry that you may obtain the rank and wealth you are so calculated to em-

bellish. *These* are the solid satisfactions of life ; one has soon outlived *sentiment*."

" Rely on me, Mamma," said Harriet, decisively.

" And in choosing my cashmere, love, be guided by Mrs. Middleton's judgement as to its value, but your own taste as to its pattern. I shall look for it with anxiety as soon as you land,"—and the thought at what an immense distance that landing would take place, brought on another hysteric, which kept Miss Albany from her bed until the night was half gone.

And thus, amidst injunctions regarding matrimony and cashmeres, and varied by hysterics and weeping, that mother and daughter parted.

CHAPTER II.

No young woman was ever hoisted on board an India-bound vessel more disposed to break the hearts of half the passengers, than Miss Albany, and no chaperon was ever more anxious to prevent flirtation in its least objectionable form, than Mrs. Middleton.

“Let me recommend you, my dear,” said the matron, “to remain as much in your own cabin as is consistent with your health. I should be sorry to see you or my child in the cuddy during the morning.”

“But my constitution absolutely requires exercise,” said Miss Albany, smiling graciously, as she always did until matters were positively decided against her.

“Then if you *must* walk, take the colonel’s arm,” said Mrs. Middleton. “Younger beaux

will be glad to offer their escort, but if his be less agreeable, it has at least the advantage of being safer."

"*Safer*, my dear Mrs. Middleton!—I assure you I cannot pay such a compliment to the male part of our society, as to suspect any of them of being dangerous. A set of more boorish, priggish, *ourang-outangish* animals of the masculine gender, it has never before been my misfortune to be placed amongst."

"I thought last night, when we were on the poop, you rather distinguished Mr. Pelham."

"Yes, my dear madam,—just as a child distinguishes *bouncing* B, from great A, and little a,—by its being more conspicuous. The creature is so sublimely ridiculous, that it is not in human nature to resist encouraging him to exhibit himself."

"But if he should detect your charitable views, he may avenge himself by propagating a hundred mischievous reports of you on your arrival in India."

"People must be miserably weak to listen to him."

“But they will act as you do,—they *will* listen to him for the sake of the amusement he affords. So he will have an opportunity of repeating all he pleases to assert, until—as usual—people believe that which they are accustomed to hear.”

“But do not you think that my satire may be as biting as his?”

“Yes, but not as palatable. A young woman first arriving at the Presidency is an object of curiosity, and her rivals have an interest in believing and circulating every tale to her disadvantage which their ingenuity can collect. It is thus every where, and with your great personal attractions, and—forgive my candour—your *little* discretion, your own experience must abundantly illustrate my argument.”

“I forgive the reproof for the sake of the compliment, and I assure you I mean to be very good, and very obedient, and as gentle as Florence, for the most part, if you will but allow me a little gentle recreation, once during

the twenty-four hours in quizzing or flirtation, —*c'est égal*."

Mrs. Middleton shook her head.

"Consider the intolerable dulness of this cabin," resumed the pretty Harriet. "Flap go the sails—flap—flap—at the damage of a rupee a minute, according to the calculation of the captain. The thermometer stands at 85 ; there is not a ripple on the wave,—not a cloud on the sky,—not a smile on the face of a human being, except my own. In such a situation, I must acknowledge, I think a flirtation would be a very pretty innocent amusement, not half so fatiguing as quizzing, the other alternative ; we are just at the end of the verb "*Je m'ennuie, tu t'ennuyes, il s'ennuie*,"—and, Florence, my dear, intercede for a little *divertissement*, a sigh or so, as you love me."

"But you have already enjoyed it," said her companion," for Mr. Pelham's sighs last night might have fanned the sails."

"So they did, my dear, but considering the pains I have taken, they ought to be able to

blow the ship into harbour. Heigh-ho!—how that man does bore me!”

“He is very disagreeable,” said Florence.

“Don’t depreciate my conquests, Florry, or I shall suspect you of an intention of purloining them. The man is very well in his way, only one is apt to tire even of *toujours perdrix*.”

The voice of her husband at this moment summoned Mrs. Middleton to her own cabin.

“Confess my dear, that your excellent mamma is a little too hard on us,” said Miss Albany.

“Admit on your part that it is a *safe* error.”

Miss Albany looked at her some time in silence. “I very much doubt, Florence,” she said at length, “whether you and I have a single feeling in common.”

“Oh, many, we are both heartily tired of this calm, par exemple.”

“Pshaw!—nonsense!—that is not what I mean. I think I should like you better if you had a little less prudence, or I a little more.”

“Like me as much as you reasonably can, but don’t wish me any additional folly.”

“Well then only confess that you would like, a little—just a very *leetle*—more amusement in the way of flirtation, than your mamma thinks prudent, or discreet, or desirable.”

“Not guilty, upon honour,” said Florence, laughing. “You know I have not been used to it.”

“To be sure there is much in *that*, it must be conceded. Now I, who have been *out* these five years, and been toasted, and sung *to*, and *of*;—had my choice of the best partners in every ball-room;—*I* require something more stimulating to pass the heavy hours away, than a book, an easel, or a piano-forte.”

“But you consider the passengers not particularly agreeable, and surely any one of the resources you mention is preferable to the conversation of a silly or a malevolent person.”

“Sweet simplicity!—Listen to me, child; is it not benevolent to desire to please others, be they as foolish or wicked as they may?”

“ *Cela depend*, and I think generally, *no*.”

“ Why you most unchristian kitten ! are you to sit in judgement on your fellow-creatures, before you venture to embellish their existence as much as in you lies ? ”

“ Before you *serve* them, *no* ;—before you *please* them, *yes*.”

“ Is not to *please*, to *serve* ? When an unhappy wretch groans over the weariness of life, are you not *serving* him by turning his desert into elysium ? And it is my theory, that one of the most charitable acts in the world, is to put a fellow-creature on good terms with himself. How can you effect that more easily or more certainly, than by listening to all the nonsense he may be pleased to utter, with an air of *empressement* ? The more he is convinced that he has made a favourable impression on you, the more he is pleased.”

“ But if subsequently he should discover you have been making him ridiculous for your own amusement ?—have listened merely to satirize, and smiled *with* him only to laugh loudly *at* him ? ”

“People must take things as they find them, and for my part I like to enjoy the world as it is, without waiting until it or I arrive at perfection. Besides, it does not follow that all these people are such wild beasts as one’s safety requires one to shun.”

In fact, Miss Albany had commenced the voyage with expectations of amusement that could not have been realized, even if the restraining advice of Mrs. Middleton had been withholden. As it was,—but let her speak for herself in her first letter from Madras to England.

“MY DEAREST DARLING MAMMA,

“RETURN thanks in my behalf that the voyage is actually over; that I have escaped at length from that floating prison, a ship,—different, as Dr. Johnson says, from other prisons, only by being in constant danger of shipwreck. Sea-sickness, of course, one expected, and was bound to endure without much grumbling, but after recovering one’s looks I think one had a right to make as much amusement as one could.

My duenna, however, thought otherwise, and I, as in duty bound, gave up the point; that is, as far as overt measures were concerned; but to a little *telegraphing* with 'nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,' I must plead guilty, now that I am at confession before one who so well understands me.

"On our arrival at Madras, a friend of Colonel Middleton's lent him a handsome house on the Mount-Road, the occupant of which was absent on *sick-leave*, as they call it in their barbarous technicalities. We found ourselves, therefore, very comfortable, without the annoyance of being subject to the rules of another person's establishment, as must have been the case, if the colonel had accepted any of the invitations he received, as soon as it was known that his family were amongst the passengers on board the *Cassiopeia*. Though I suspect I am not by any means a favourite of his, I must do him the justice to say, he appears to be highly esteemed amongst a very distinguished circle. When I observe his quick eye watching all my movements, I confess I do

feel a little inclination to mischief—a wish to render his fair daughter rather more like myself than he would altogether approve. Florence, however, with all her gentleness, has abundance of self-will, and is as impracticable a person as ever I chanced to meet with. The colonel is, at present, posted to a regiment now in Birmah, but hopes to get removed. I think he would rather remain at Madras. Should he effect this object, I know not how the Resident will contrive that my fair self shall be conveyed in safety a thousand miles, which must be travelled over before I shall be under the shelter of his wing. Macadamized roads and posting are not yet in vogue in this remote region, and I have no particular relish for the tediousness of a journey by palanquin, at the rate of twelve miles a day. I am told that such journeys are very pleasant; that every day you occupy new ground, and if your faculties are not unusually obtuse, must consequently find objects to interest you. These people do not understand that a three months' banishment from society can never be contemplated

with patience by one who has sustained so brilliant a rôle as I have. As the journey *must* be made, I hope I shall have the solace of agreeable companionship.

“ I know, my dear mamma, I am writing a sad rambling letter, *as usual*, and have filled all this paper without once speaking of a point on which, I am sure, you are most anxious for information, viz., what effect I have produced on the *beau monde* of Madras. Chère maman, j’ai en un grand succès. Never, in my best days, have I been so admired, followed, wooed, flattered. ‘ *No more?* ’ you ask. Yes, mother; not empty wooing, but real, downright, bonâ fide proposals! ‘ Have I accepted any? ’ None! As my heart is untouched, Mrs. Middleton advises me to wait a little. *My heart untouched!* Poor dear woman, if she knew how little that said heart of mine ever had been troubled—ever meant to be troubled—by *la belle passion*. Cupid would be formidable to me only when garlanded with jewels, and armed with golden arrows. Roses and myrtles I leave for those who love the good things of this world

less than I do,—for Florence, by way of illustration. Indeed, dear mamma, every new victim to my *beaux yeux* inspires me with higher ambition, and rely on my making the best possible *parti*, or I will return to dear England in single blessedness. What have I written? No; that must never be! That would indeed open the hundred mouths of slander! A girl returned from India as unmarketable! Poor thing; she had better put up with the indignity of subalternship.

“Florence, too, has received greater homage than, in truth, I expected. It is your middle-aged, serious gentlemen,—or your silent, sentimental youths,—who rejoice to bask in the moon-beam of her charms, —just the class whose weak vision is dazzled by my noontide refulgence. By the way, do you not think my language breathes of this gorgeous and metaphorical East? I have hitherto eschewed poetry, but I begin to be less certain than I used, that ‘the gods have *not* made me poetical.’ Florence, as I was saying, has not been overlooked, and if she had the art *de se*

faire valoir, I rather think I should be doomed 'to have a rival near the throne.' As it is, if we should both be unfortunate enough to aim at the same object, I fear the poor child would be utterly undone.

"Having set your mind at ease on this important point,—having painted myself in the enviable attitude of *refusing* proposals in the discreet expectation of being yet to listen to others infinitely more desirable—let me descend to less interesting topics on which you wished to be informed. The state of a society which has the good taste to distinguish *me* by unbounded admiration, cannot be very uncivilized. The officials, that is, I mean those who hold the higher positions in the government offices, are the *haute noblesse*—which class includes, of course, civil and military functionaries, 'and herein' the most honourable the members of council. We heard a great deal in England about quarrels for precedence, but I have seen nothing of the kind here. Every body's claims are so well understood, that there is no room for dispute. My own sex, if dis-

tinguished by no other good quality, are at least excellent as foils to a newly arrived European, with a complexion painted by the north wind; but—hold my pen!—I mean not to be satirical as it spoils one's smile; expect a more minute picture of manners when my own destiny is settled. Until then I mean to speak and write only words of honeyed sweetness, and to *your* taste a portraiture utterly *en beau* would, I know, be most insipid.

“Of the natives of this region, Mrs. Middleton told you so much that I need add nothing; moreover, you have models of them in all possible varieties of costume. I see nothing of them except in the shape of servants, or as moving figures in the landscape I survey, whenever we drive out. *At present*, I am tempted to consider the Cenotaph at the entrance of the Mount Road, more attractive than the Achilles of Hyde Park, for as we whirl round it in our evening airing, I am quite sure to be overtaken by half a dozen *preux chevaliers* who ride by our carriage to bask in my smiles. But fear not, dear mamma! *Discre-*

tion is my forte just now, and I sustain it à *merveille*.

‘ Favours to none, to all she smiles extends ’—

so that even Mrs. Middleton cannot accuse me of coquetry.

“ Adieu, dearest mamma. Mrs. Middleton writes to you. Rely on my prudence; nothing shall tempt me to relinquish my claims to fortune and position.

“ Your dutiful and affectionate

“ HARRIET.”

Colonel Middleton was exerting all his interest to be appointed to the command of a regiment at the Presidency. He was neither insensible to the inconveniences of travelling with his family, nor to the advantages his remaining at Madras would put in the way of his child. He had so many influential friends, that he had great hopes of accomplishing his object, when the following letter convinced him that he must bow to the omnipotence of superior interest.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I read your letter with the greatest satisfaction. I am truly rejoiced to hear, that my niece has accomplished a voyage to India under the protection of your excellent lady,—an advantage I am quite able to appreciate. Accept my sincere thanks for your careful guardianship of my kinswoman, and assure yourself that I shall be most ready and happy to evince my gratitude in any shape in which it may please you to put my services in requisition.

“ I think you will not be surprised that I should be desirous, if possible, of securing to my niece the advantage of your protection until she is fairly established in my own house. To effect this object, I have exerted myself to get you appointed to the command of the — regiment, now forming part of this subsidiary force. I trust my doing so will not interfere with any plans you may have marked out for yourself. I have taken care to ascertain that none but junior lieutenant-colonels are in com-

mand of regiments at this station, and as the brigadier is absent on sick-certificate, you will remain in command of the whole force during an indefinite time,—indeed, I may hint, that I shall find no difficulty in securing it to you as long as you may feel it desirable to continue in this neighbourhood. I hope this arrangement will be satisfactory to you, and will evince that, although I have been selfish enough to endeavour to obtain for my niece your protection on her journey, I have not done so at the expense of any disadvantage to yourself.

“ Mrs. Norman unites with me in the hope that, until you have suited yourselves with a house, yourself, with Mrs. and Miss Middleton, will favour us with your company at the Residency.

“ Yours, dear Sir, truly,

“ THOMAS NORMAN.

“ Residency, Kirkpore.”

Colonel Middleton could not but allow, that if the Resident of Kirkpore had, in the first

place, consulted his own convenience by this arrangement, he had not been selfish enough to neglect *his* interest. He would, probably, had other advantages been equal, or perhaps even approaching an equality, have preferred Madras as his place of abode, but he would not have deemed himself justified in relinquishing the superior emolument thus offered to him, even if the choice had been in his power. He therefore made preparations for commencing his journey forthwith.

To Florence Middleton the march was full of the most pleasurable excitement. The season was delightful; — the monsoon had ended; — the cold weather — such cold weather as is to be enjoyed in the regions of southern India — had set in; — the earth was covered with a grateful verdure; — hundreds of unknown flowers bloomed in the occasional jungles through which their route lay; — the lofty palmyras extended their broad leaves to the breeze, and the graceful arekas displayed their taper trunks surmounted with a star of foliage. The “desert ship” — the camel — patiently toiled

along, laden with their tents and provisions;—all sense of solitude was lost in the busy hum proceeding from their numberless attendants, and the crowd of women and children belonging to them. The commodious array of tents stretched out on the bank of a river, or beneath the shade of a mango-tope, or, more happily still, of a banyan-tree, gave a character of romance and adventure to a journey which was, in reality, as safe as if performed on a Macadamized road in England. Even Harriet breathed no sigh after crowded assemblies during the first two or three weeks. She saw mosques with their snowy minarets tapering in the sun, and she quoted Lord Byron; she gazed on the massy pagoda, rendered gigantic as the shadows of the evening fell on it, and she repeated the mysteries of Southey. She sketched groups of the natives as they sat or reclined round the fires they kindled at night-fall, listening to the voice of some story-teller,—still the favorite pastime of the Hindus. In a position where her prejudices and her weaknesses were never called into action, the really

amiable points of her character, her gaiety, her good temper, that disposition to oblige which is acquired by the habit of mixing with the best society, became more apparent. Her accomplishments, frivolous when they constitute all the intellectual acquirements of a responsible being, were enjoyed by herself and her companions, as affording the most agreeable recreation. Her guitar—that portable instrument so well suited to the vagrant mode of life usual amongst the greater proportion of European residents in India,—was delightful as the evening was closing in, and her voice formed an accompaniment so pleasant that you scarcely perceived it had little compass. The sustained cheerfulness of Florence seemed almost insipid when contrasted with the brilliant vivacity of her companion, and the playfulness of youth, innocence, and an unoccupied heart, was mere childishness compared with the vivacious wit that occasionally pointed the sallies of Harriet. But at length, the whole of the appointments of their caravan, as she called it, became familiar to her; the country was mono-

tonous; the trees she could call by their names; the costume of the natives lost its picturesque appearance when seen every day; the dulness of so many successive days passed in a tent, with no civilized eye to gaze on her, no cultivated tongue to whisper the flatteries which use had rendered necessary, destroyed all that sprightliness which resulted from extraneous circumstances. If she touched her guitar, it was with a careless hand, and no persuasion could induce her to sing. As she herself expressed it, she was *ennuied* to death. She was ready to quarrel with Florence, because her cheerfulness, flowing from internal sources, continued unabated,—because she still found something to admire, something to enquire about, or wonder at, in each day's march. If one thing was more insupportable to Harriet than another, it was the regular recurrence of the *halt*; in vain she entreated Colonel Middleton to proceed without any delay, protesting she was not in the least fatigued, and could not believe that any of their cavalcade could be more so than herself. She was

sure every person, if left to pursue his own inclinations, would push on without halting at all—indeed, her Ayah * had said so. Colonel Middleton admitted the wearisomeness of the delay; but pleaded the absolute necessity of giving rest to their weary cattle. He even ventured to express a doubt whether the desire of the Ayah, to proceed without resting, was shared by the servants generally. She, having the advantage of riding a tattoo †, might possibly be more able to endure an uninterrupted journey of eleven or twelve weeks, better than those who were compelled to walk; and he recommended Miss Albany to tell her, that some consideration for the comfort of others—some-what less selfishness—would be a passport to the favour of her mistress. Harriet felt the rebuke, and ceased from all efforts to gain this point, on which her heart was quite set. However, she recompensed herself by inflicting on her companions a series of daily complaints and murmurings. Her countenance exhibited

* Lady's-maid.

† Pony.

incessant gloom, and her whole manner was intended to intimate a thorough dissatisfaction with every person and thing about her. She rarely conversed, and turned with an air of weariness from every book Mrs. Middleton offered her. As many of these indispensable companions on a long march as conscience would permit, were deposited in the palanquin of each lady traveller, and being selected by a person experienced in journeying about India, they were not of a kind that required any painful degree of attention. Harriet, however, yawned over them as if they were the driest treatises ever penned by a political economist. Her great consolation consisted in evincing her extreme disgust with the circumstances in which she was placed, and from which there was no possibility of an immediate release. It might answer very well, she said, for people of duller intellect than hers, or for your very first-rate geniuses, to which class *she* did not belong, to waste existence in a desert, amongst a crowd of half naked savages. For her part, having been accustomed

to the enjoyments of civilization, she had no taste for life in a wilderness. She had not the least idea of the time consumed in travelling in India. She wished she had remained at Madras; *there*, at least, you felt that you were amongst human beings, and there was a chance of your being understood.

At length, however, just as Colonel Middleton had been worn into pronouncing his ward the most thankless, capricious, and selfish of womankind, he had the satisfaction of terminating his temporary guardianship, by depositing her in safety at the Residency of Kirkpore.

CHAPTER III.

MR. NORMAN had been thirty-five years in India. He had passed through all the stages of the civil service—from the subordinate capacity of a writer and sub-collector to the dignity of a member of council. He had originally intended to return to England after having attained that distinction, but he found he had not realized the income which he deemed sufficient to enable him to live in his native country with the splendour befitting his station; another five hundred per annum must absolutely be added to his present possessions. Just as he made this discovery, he became involved in hostilities with the governor, which, as the weaker must always yield to the stronger, ended in his being deprived of his seat at the council board, and sent to a kind of honourable exile as Resident of Kirkpore. Here he found his conso-

lation in the immense addition he was enabled to make to his annual deposits at his agent's, and he sought his revenge, by canvassing every measure of government with unlimited severity. He was apparently checked by no consideration of the possible future exercise of the power that had already humbled him ; perhaps he was aware that, at such a distance from the presidency, he was considered too harmless to provoke vengeance. His desire of accumulating did not, by any means, check the display of hospitality which he knew to be incumbent on a person occupying his position ; it did but render him careful, that his table and establishment should present an appearance answerable to his expenditure. He was the most vigilant of masters. In vain the practised dubashees * endeavoured to appropriate those profits, which elsewhere they had regarded as their own perquisites. Well acquainted with the language of the country, every dealer was admitted to his presence, and he negotiated all his own purchases, with a strict understanding

* Butlers.

that no *custom* * whatever was to be allowed to his servants. He observed, with minute attention, the *débris* of every entertainment, and required the most exact account, punishing every peculation with a fine or dismissal. In short, if ever man was endowed with a peculiar talent for getting rich, Mr. Norman was that man.

Mr. Norman had committed one great error, to which he, indeed, when too late, became as sensible as any one of the dear friends who exemplified the maxim of the Frenchman, that “there is something in the misfortunes of our best friends, which is not disagreeable to us.” Five years previously to the arrival of his niece, he had committed the capital crime of a foolish marriage with a very pretty, very young, and very extravagant girl, who had exhibited herself in the Indian market, with the intention of selling her charms for their full value. A *member of council* was a match to satisfy even her own appreciation of her specific worth,

* A per centage given by the seller to the domestics of the buyer—a fee universal throughout India.

and her acceptance of her somewhat elderly lover was followed very shortly by her marriage. A year afterwards, to her great dismay,—for she liked to display her person and her jewels at the galas constantly occurring at Madras,—she was compelled to accompany her husband to the comparative retirement of Kirkpore. Here she filled her house with as many of the young officers from the neighbouring cantonment as she could muster, and omitted no opportunity of attending the public amusements of the station. There, as “lady of the ascendant,” she found, in the homage universally paid either to her rank or her attractions, some consolation for the loss of Presidency splendours. She enjoyed the double distinction of being the *burrah bebe sahib* *, and the belle of the place, and it is difficult to say from which source she derived the highest gratification. If she was proud of her rank, she was not less vain of her beauty; and shrinking from the remote possibility of finding a rival in the

* Great lady—a term always applied by the natives to the lady of the highest official.

niece of her husband, she had strenuously opposed his intention of inviting her to India, and finally sold her consent for a gold bracelet with a magnificent diamond clasp, which she had long coveted in vain, and which she could not obtain on more moderate terms, Mr. Norman positively refusing to purchase it whilst she continued obstinate. She was not, therefore, prepared to entertain the most amiable feelings in the world for the fair Harriet.

Her worst apprehensions were more than realized. Her vanity had not permitted her to expect in her ward attractions so much more dazzling than her own. The sparkling eye — the animated countenance — the blooming complexion — the playful grace of her manner, — constituted a constellation of charms which warned Mrs. Norman that her star was in the wane. Nor did Mr. Norman's evident and loudly expressed admiration of his niece at all increase her satisfaction. 'To say the truth, the manners of the young lady herself were not the most conciliating possible; she was too familiar with

the secret workings of envy to misunderstand the expression of Mrs. Norman's countenance, and she played on the weakness of her uncle's wife, by arrogating to herself all the superiority allowed to an established beauty.

"Is not she a Goth?" said Harriet to Florence, the first moment she could contrive a tête-à-tête. "Confess, did you ever see anything so palpable as the small meanness of her jealousy? She hates me already,—my little familiar whispers she will have greater cause."

Florence gazed on her companion.

"I wonder how those dove-like eyes of yours contrive to express reproof so severely," said Harriet laughing; "you think it would be my wisdom to propitiate this vindictive Juno?"

"It would be wise to be on good terms with the mistress of the house in which you are compelled to reside," said Florence. "Besides, it is rather early to have discovered so much."

"Oh, but I am a person always quick at seeing things. Then I doat on first impressions, and never give up my prejudices."

“ You are drawing a rational picture of yourself, truly ! ‘ I would not hear thine enemy say so.’ ”

“ Satirical, most gentle Florence ! At any rate my perverseness has elicited something. But you have not answered my question,—what do you think of Mrs. Norman ? ”

“ That she is an excessively pretty woman.”

“ Precisely—just the most insipid creature in the world. A pretty nose, a pretty mouth, pretty eyes, and a pretty figure ! Give me downright sensible ugliness ; it is a thousand times less disagreeable. Of all animals on the face of the earth, I hate a pretty woman.”

Florence smiled again. Miss Albany understood why she did so, and as she always piqued herself on the magnanimity with which she allowed the beauty of her rivals, she felt more offended than she cared to show ; for a *demi-confidante*, one to whom she could say all she chose to say without fear of betrayal, was absolutely necessary to her just at this juncture.

“ Did you hear her sing ? ” resumed Harriet, as if unmindful of the pause. “ The poor,

hackneyed, 'Blue Bonnets over the Border!' No beauty on earth could withstand the diminishing effects of those discordant tones. Who could admire a mouth, however beautiful, that emitted such screech-owl sounds? It is a pity that some women will never learn the wisdom of being silent."

"Our accusers say, it is a difficult lesson to our sex."

"They assert too much, and taking things for granted is the cause of there being so many dupes amongst mankind. A woman who has an object in view, is as capable of being prudent as the wisest of creation's lords. The worst weakness of *our* sex,—and treasure up the lesson, child,—is that they set about playing the game of life, as if it were a pastime; they fix on no precise goal, and running here, there, and everywhere, it is no wonder that so many of them lose their labour. To be sure, *matrimony* is a thing of necessary occurrence, which they all expect some time, and which they would be very glad to expedite. Their error lies in not ascertaining precisely the amount of their de-

sires,—what they consider absolutely indispensable in a husband, and what may be overlooked. *Some* sacrifices must be made. Love in our days is happily very little thought of; women are not educated so as to permit their indulging it. They must have a certain establishment, and a girl's first step in life ought to be taken after she has settled with herself what she can put up with,—what she requires. Some sacrifices of our own tastes must be made in the attainment of every desirable end."

"For my part, I have quite settled it with myself, that love on both sides is an indispensable preliminary to marriage," said Florence, with a blush that almost eclipsed her smile.

"I did not expect such a declaration from your mother's daughter. *Esteem* and *regard* I did look for, but *love*,—is not that *un peu fort*?"

"My mother's daughter," said Florence gravely, "has been taught, that pure and virtuous love is the best blessing bestowed on human beings,—and that mother's example illustrates the lesson."

“We are only calling the same thing by different names, I suspect. Now, what Mrs. Middleton exhibits to the Colonel, is *esteem* and *regard*, according to my definition of the terms, but not *love*.”

“What *is* love, then?” said Florence, warmly. “Are you not aware that my father, when a cornet in the king’s service, was engaged to my mother on the strength of an attachment that had commenced in his boyhood and her childhood?—that on the grounds of prudence, their union was opposed by her friends, and they waited—yes, as my father says, he served for my mother as Jacob served for Rachel. With little interest and small fortune, he accepted a cadetship in India, and my mother, then sixteen, remained constant during eight years, though sought by the affluent and the noble; for in her day, as Mrs. Albany has told you, she was a distinguished beauty. Promotion then, papa says, was more rapid than at present, and when those said eight years had expired, he gained at once his company and a sick certificate. In England he married

my mother, and the devotedness with which she has since shared all the perils of his Indian life, proves the depth of her affection for her husband. This is to me a sacred subject," continued Florence, her eyes becoming tearfully brilliant; "may I love as my mother loves, and *be* loved—nay, *honoured*, as she is!"

The lip of Miss Albany slightly curled. "This is a very pretty little romance, my dear," she said, "and we will not quarrel about it. As for myself, having no intention whatever of feeling love, or any thing approaching to it, you must allow me to speculate a little wildly. People do not come to India, I conclude, to marry for love. Mrs. Norman, I am sure, did not."

"Perhaps the sentiment might have saved her from those bad qualities which you detect in her."

"Excuse me, my dear; I have no taste—to quote that learned bear, Johnson—for imagining probable circumstances in impossible situations. What Mrs. Norman might have been,

it is not worth while conjecturing; she is a trifling, vain, ignorant, affected, spiteful, contemptible animal, whom I shall be able to endure only if I find any amusement can be extracted from her. The Residency, however, will not be a dull abode, for I suspect the lady of the mansion is not much given to tête-à-têtes with her liege lord. They talk, you hear, of giving a ball as the best means of introducing us, and by its taking place whilst you remain with us, it will, as Mrs. Norman elegantly expresses it, 'be killing two birds with one stone.' Apropos of Mrs. Norman—I shall commence immediately with bestowing on her the honourable appellation of '*aunt*;' she ought to be grateful that I acknowledge the relationship."

This conversation did not, by any means, tend to render the speakers more intimate with each other. Harriet was vexed at the decision with which Florence expressed her opinions, as much as at the opinions themselves. She thought a girl who had seen so little of the world, ought to defer to her su-

perior knowledge of its ways. She was also irritated at her own weakness in paying her companion that involuntary homage which was evinced by the pains she took to conceal her *strongest* sentiments. She had a secret, but, at the same time, a continually operating consciousness, that Florence's mind was more powerful than her own; that there was something in her, either natural or acquired, which elevated her in the scale of human beings to a height she did not expect to reach. It was not accomplishment—hardly, perhaps, acquirement—it was *intellect* in its most abstract, its most spiritual sense. And with all the modesty—the simplicity of Florence, there was a grace, a poetry, in her whole manner, which, Miss Albany sometimes thought, would have been cheaply purchased by the loss of much of her own knowledge *de se faire valoir*. Even whilst she derided the enthusiasm with which her companion regarded the glories of the visible creation—the beauties her more gifted mind discerned in “the forms of things,” she secretly envied her the expressive loveliness,—the

holy purity—if the term be permitted—it imparted to her countenance, when her eyes shone like the stars she gazed on. Harriet suspected that if Florence were undervalued by the mass of the performers in this world's vanities, she would be actually adored by those who were distinguished from that mass—precisely the beings whose opinion was worth having. She fancied that at a crowded assembly her own more brilliant charms would enjoy the greater tribute of admiration, but she admitted, with a sigh, that in parties of a more domestic kind, Florence would be a formidable, a triumphant opponent.

Florence, on the other hand, feared that the wit she so much admired in Harriet, was shaded by malevolence; she lamented the absence of all those feelings which were cherished in the deepest sanctuary of her own bosom,—an unbounded veneration for religion, a perception of beauty in the whole creation, an aspiration after that perfect excellence which can be achieved only with immortality. Her youth, her education, had preserved to Florence the

first gloss of her feelings; she had lived so much in communion with nature, so little with the world, in its common sense, that Miss Albany's views excited in her as much amazement as disapprobation. At the commencement of their acquaintance, her heart had expanded to Harriet with all the warmth with which the young and inexperienced hail a new and legitimate object of attachment. She so much wished to love her companion, that she was resolutely blind to as many of her imperfections as her penetration would permit her to overlook. Those she was compelled to allow, she attributed to unfortunate associations—to an injudicious education—to the example of a weak mother. She bore with caprices that would have tried the equanimity of Griselda; she endured a vanity that was bent on asserting its own unbounded claims at the expense of all the legitimate claims of others; she tolerated a selfishness that permitted no consideration for the feelings of its associates—hardly the demands of duty—to check its vast indulgence. But Florence was not altogether an angel. She loved her mother with a love

“passing show,” and the slightest expression of disregard for that revered being occasioned a revulsion of every favourable sentiment with which she might previously have regarded the offender. *This* had opened her eyes to the foibles of her companion; had restrained her manner, and had caused her to look forwards to the time when she should quit the Residency for the less splendid abode of her father, with an impatience that was not alleviated by the prospect of the gala which was to celebrate her introduction to the society of the place.

One cause of the dislike of women for each other, did not exist in the case of these two girls; their objects were so different, that it was difficult to imagine the occurrence of positive rivalry between them. Florence came to India in the expectation that, at some period, no matter how remote, she should love, marry, and be happy,—Harriet, on the contrary, in the certainty, that very speedily she should captivate, marry, and be *rich* and great—the summum bonum of her wishes.

CHAPTER IV.

A BALL in India is distinguished from balls in all other parts of the world, only by the exhibition of punkahs in the dancing-room, the paucity of ladies, and the horrible custom of drinking *beer* at supper. To be sure, that beverage in the east is *exotic*, and is valued, as exotics are everywhere else, for its rarity and the extravagant price at which, compared with its real worth, it is procured. The gala in question was holden in the banquet-room of the Residency, and went off, as the newspapers say, with the greatest possible éclat.

To ascertain the impression produced by the two new arrivals, let us record the conversation of a coterie assembled at the house of Colonel Huggins, the officer who had commanded the Force from the date of the depar-

ture of the brigadier, until he was superseded by the unwelcome appearance and indisputable seniority of Colonel Middleton.

His lady belonged to that anomalous class known in India by the generic appellation of half-castes. Her English was not of so perfect a kind that she would have been pronounced *not* English from the purity of her language, as the Grecian of old was known to be a provincial, by the purity of his *Attic* dialect. She was, nevertheless, a star of the first magnitude in the intellectual circles of Kirkpore. She had a faculty of repartee, the point of which was never blunted by any of those considerations of delicacy or charity which prevent so many witticisms from seeing the light of day. The hospitality of her house was unbounded, and young men, not surrounded with too many temptations to amusement, were not inclined to condemn the little errors of their hostess. She was not much beloved by the superior part of her own sex; but being a considerable patroness of those whose insignificance rendered her own importance more prominent, none could accuse

her of being excluded from female society. Two or three, who were stigmatized by her and her followers as being *exclusives*, stood aloof, but, generally, she was on visiting terms with the whole cantonment.

The lady of the Residency and the *ci-devant* lady of the Force embodied, in their own persons, all the virulent animosity towards each other which may be said to characterise the respective services of which they were appendages. Mrs. Norman hated beauties—Mrs. Huggins detested wits; consequently, each had a particular penchant for the objects of the other's aversion. Mrs. Norman never spoke above her breath;—Mrs. Huggins talked like a dragoon. Mrs. Norman's toilette was the most *recherchée* imaginable;—Mrs. Huggins passed the greater part of the day in a slip-shod *deshabille*. Mrs. Norman affected the accomplishments of the modern school;—Mrs. Huggins disclaimed and ridiculed them all. Mrs. Norman danced at every ball;—Mrs. Huggins at none. Mrs. Norman affected a fashionable indifference for her husband, and probably felt it;—Mrs.

Huggins, on the contrary, patronised her lord and master with considerable empressement, never treating him with any of that caustic severity which distinguished her bearing to others, except when his conduct was immeasurably provoking. On such occasions she was in the habit of alluding to certain family circumstances, which he was particularly desirous of burying in eternal oblivion ; generally prefacing such disclosures by assuming her gentlest manner, and blandly addressing the sufferer by the endearing appellation of “ my dear Dickey.”

Dickey himself,—as he was called in familiar parlance,—Colonel Huggins, when honoured with his own style and title,—believed that, with the single exception of his own beloved wife, all the world looked on him as a most distinguished and illustrious personage. His countenance had that Roman outline which imposes sometimes on superficial observers, as being dignified and intellectual, whereas more accurate examiners find it as often appropriated by as moon-struck a calf as ever owned that unfortunate nasal appurtenance, a dutch-

pug. Dickey was extremely well satisfied with his person, and was most ambitious in his wardrobe. He talked quite as much in alt as his lady, but with the advantage of rather better English, for he piqued himself on his acquaintance with "the humanities." His speech was deliberate, and his enunciation very pompous. He liked to be surrounded by young men who could not possibly aim at the impertinence of affecting an equality with himself, and in short fully justified his claims to the title of *bahadur** generally added to the friendly abbreviation "Dickey,"—by which the world at large knew him.

Mrs. Huggins had as many satellites as the Georgium Sidus. At the head of her present list stood Ensign Simms, as gentle a youth as a red coat ever blushed upon. He was a very small gentleman, whose delicate proportions seemed as if he were selected by his patroness for the sake of the marked contrast he offered to the magnitude of her full-blown person. He

* Literally a title of honour, but applied generally by English residents in India, to persons affecting *the great man*.

was a smooth-faced, sallow-complexioned youth, evidently designed by Nature as a model for the genus that figures on the wrong side of a haberdasher's counter. His genius, moreover, had a decided inclination for that line. His gloves, —his stocks,—all the paraphernalia of his wardrobe,—were selected with the nicest discrimination of their quality, and with a scrupulous regard to their fitting him accurately. Yet with that *want of keeping* common in poor human beings, with all his finical precision, his leading passion was a fondness for dogs. Wherever his quarters were fixed, it was his first care to erect kennels for the accommodation of the four-footed favourites he carried about with him, and he superintended in person their feeding, &c., &c., with a zeal that contrasted forcibly with his ordinary coldness. His principal recreation was shooting,—a pursuit to which he was addicted rather from a predilection for canine society, than from an unamiable propensity to slaughter any part of the creation. He found greater pleasure in the sound of his own "*halloo!*" than in the report of his gun;

at least this inference was drawn from the fact that he rarely bagged any game. On the whole he was a very inoffensive specimen of selfishness, following his own inclinations with praiseworthy straightforwardness, and caring very little for the life or death of any individual in the world, except as his own promotion might thereby be advanced. With all these excellent qualities,—with the additional negative characteristics of being no swearer, no drunkard, no brawler,—it is not surprising that “little Simms” was declared by the whole regiment, and the society in general, to be “a very gentlemanly fellow.”

Scarcely second to Ensign Simms in the favour of Mrs. Huggins, ranked Lieutenant Mac Wharley, and perhaps there lurked a little of the mischievous acuteness of the lady in placing these two contrasts in the close juxtaposition by which she delighted to honour them. Mr. Mac Wharley was so singularly rough and blunt as to be unanimously shunned by those who had no taste for being wounded by the bristles of a hedge-hog. He spoke with the voice of

a stentor, which to fastidious ears was not rendered more tolerable by a broad Scotch accent that bore undeniable evidence to the land of his nativity. His dress, if not so strictly correct as that of Ensign Simms, was always extremely passable, for to give the gentlemen of India their due, slovenliness is by no means their besetting sin. He insisted that Scotland possessed all the national virtues that could appertain unto any country, and that every individual Scotchman was a very clever and a very honourable fellow. He never read himself, but he was as insolent as he dared, to any luckless wight who, in his presence, ventured to disapprove either the politics, literature, or principles, either of "*the EDINBURGH*" or "*Blackwood*;" and as it was scarcely possible to speak of them on the same occasion, without condemning *one*,—as it is evident that the same thing cannot be at once black and white,—his wrath was excited with considerable frequency. He followed, without being conscious of it, Doctor Parr's never-enough-to-be-commended rule of proceeding with a literary antagonist; "he

never argued ; he asserted." Having no judgement of his own, he thought it amazingly fine to bully other people out of theirs ;—thus reducing them to his level. He knew nothing of the "retort courteous," and just avoided the "lie direct," from an intimate persuasion of the consequences that must infallibly result from his indulging the bent of his humour, and which he was too prudent to encounter. He had the common weakness of his countrymen—an affectation of being well-descended, and an utter contempt for all the ungentilities of commerce ; which was the more to be deplored, as it was in the knowledge of certain persons in the cantonment, that his extraction was of such a nature as to entitle him to appear in the society of gentlemen only from having a commission ; his family being of the most obscure class in a provincial town in the north of Scotland. With all his love for his country, however, nothing enraged him more than to be pronounced a Scotchman by his accent, as he piqued himself on having entirely overcome it. He was rash, impetuous, and headstrong ;—

talked very largely of his contempt for every military superior who presumed to interfere with him,—but had enough of the “*white feather*” to steer clear of any ruinous indiscretion. People who disliked either, used to designate him and Simms, when they appeared together in Mrs. Huggins’s train, as “fire and water,” which was the more applicable, because the two had a secret antipathy, whose occasional effervescence was not unlike the *hissing* produced by plunging red-hot iron into cold water.

Captain Summers, of the Horse Artillery, ranked next in the favour of Mrs. Huggins; indeed, as the thermometer of the lady’s preference was subject to frequent fluctuation, there were times when he took the *pas* of all competitors. His friends called him a *remarkably fine* man, his claims to which title depended on a tall, stout figure, and a complexion, boasting, by dint of temperance and constant exercise, a ruddy hue, not unworthy of an English yeoman. He was allowed by every body to be a *most respectable* man; that is, he

was too dull to be disliked on account of his wit,—too prudent to be betrayed into any departure from the precise line prescribed by the dignitaries,—and too selfish to incur the danger of making ingrates by doing a good office to any human being at the slightest sacrifice to himself. He reversed the epigram applied to Charles the Second—he never *did* a foolish thing, and never *said* a wise one. He was a good listener, and if he had been a ready laugh he would have been invaluable to his liege lady; but though always earnest in his expressions of delight at her witticisms, his mind was so overloaded with ballast that it had not room for any light freight. His compliments were so ponderous, that Mrs. Huggins not unfrequently compelled him to halt mid-way, by a command as peremptory as the celebrated “Tais-toi, bête!” of Napoleon. Captain Summers was a devout optimist; he considered the British rule in India the best possible mode of government for the millions of natives who lived, in idolatry and ignorance, in the enjoyment of its blessings.

He believed the method pursued by officials, from the governor-general himself to the lowest subaltern in the department of the adjutant-general, too good for improvement; and he based his arguments on the practical proof, which the supporters of ultra-tory administrations consider irresistible,—*that it always worked well*. If any flagrant act of persecution or injustice came under his personal observation, he contented himself with the remark, that “if people *would* run into harm’s way, they must take the consequence.” It is quite certain, that having fallen into danger, they were never helped out of it by him. Perhaps his chief recommendation to the loving-kindness of Mrs. Huggins was his gastronomic capabilities. Piquing herself on the excellence of her table, and being highly accomplished in the *recondite* science of concocting a curry,—the only accomplishment which found favour in her sight,—she received the homage paid willingly by his appetite, as a special tribute to her skill. As mothers see a thousand merits in the admirers

of their daughters, so she had an especial eye for discerning merit in those who carried on a tender flirtation with her ragouts.

But the most amusing of her courtiers was Major Bing, the most undaunted liar extant. He possessed no other qualification in the world; the whole man was absorbed in one immense fiction. His mind was altogether as incapable of conceiving truth, as his tongue was repugnant to utter it. His imagination was so daring, that few could follow its flights without being absolutely breathless. Strangers listened to his myriads of anecdotes in unmingled astonishment at the memory that could retain so many of so varied a character, whilst his intimates contented themselves with lifting up their voices in praise of the magnificence of his inventions. He would have considered it disgraceful to confess ignorance of the birth, parentage, and education of any individual with whom he had been acquainted five minutes, and consequently, those who relied on his communications, were involved in an inextricable tissue of errors. To be angry was

vain. He had always an apology at hand;—regretted his mistake with so much feeling; begged to be forgiven with so much good-humour; promised to be more cautious in future; wondered at his stupidity in mistaking Brown for Jones, John Wright for Thomas Wright, and so on. Then he had always the earliest knowledge of the projected movements of corps; affected to correspond with some member or other of every government office; propagating so many different reports of the same matter, that he, of necessity, stumbled on the truth,—for, having pointed out every station in the Presidency as the future destination of a particular regiment, it was quite impossible but some individual must recollect his having named the precise place to which it was finally ordered to proceed. On this evidence he sustained a month's reputation, and indulged his imagination with such exuberant vivacity, that people began to think there must be twenty Bings in camp, instead of the one gigantic intellect that propagated those unutterable falsehoods. He scorned common-place beyond all earthly mean-

nesses, and hated Captain Summers, who, in return, regarded him with absolute terror, as a species of monster whom he could class under no known genus of intellectual beings. Whenever his extraordinary faculty was exerted for the entertainment of Mrs. Huggins, she rewarded him with smiles of the most amiable complacency. But when, unfortunately, with the inconsistency common to a great genius, *she* became his subject, she indulged him with a volume of exhortations, addressed to him under that uncourteous epithet which modern refinement rarely permits to people who choose to be restrained by its etiquettes. Mrs. Huggins, however, detested the whole family of bien-séances, and indulged *her* vein, as Major Bing indulged his. He revelled in the thing itself, and she rejoiced in stigmatizing it by its proper appellation ; nevertheless, Mrs. Huggins would not have parted with Bing for the brightest jewel in her cabinet, albeit she had all the fondness for jewels that characterises the nation to which, on the maternal side, she owed her descent.

Besides these stars of the first and second magnitude, there was a cluster of nebulae that, if it did not add much to the brilliancy of the hemisphere, at least served to vary its hue. Mrs. Huggins was not strong in female followers, although, as if to extenuate her dislike of her own sex in general, she was exuberantly fond of those few whom she permitted to assemble around her.

The first of her lady favourites was an Irish-woman, especially endeared to her by her negative recommendations; she was neither handsome, educated, nor refined. The least endurable thing about Mrs. Harding to the world at large was her cordiality. The lengthiness and the loudness of her greeting might have been forgiven, but to have shaken hands with her, would have been a trial to the knuckles of a Cyclops. She was the wife of an officer, distinguished, by universal consent, as the *ne plus ultra* of vulgarity,—the most thorough barbarian in the army. This trait of character was so equally developed in him and his lady, that they were luckily out of

danger of being reproached by each other, and were notorious for their connubial felicity. To laugh at them as turtles, would have been sadly out of place, but they were bantered as two most loving screech-owls.—Abounding in the gifts of fortune, they possessed the organ of *accumulativeness*, in a state of such extraordinary developement, that it absorbed their other master-passion—a love of excellent comestibles; consequently, they venerated with no small servility Colonel and Mrs. Huggins, who ministered to the latter appetite without seeking such returns as must have done violence to the former. Mrs. Harding considered Mrs. Huggins the first female character in India, and was profuse in declaring this fact to the lady herself. Loud and obtrusive as Mrs. Harding was when unrestrained by the fear of losing a portion of the good things of this world, she was, if not all mildness,—for *that* was not within the compass of things possible,—at least all submission in the presence of Mrs. Huggins, the great dispenser of luxuries. She saw everything in the precise point of

view in which her dear friend desired to exhibit it, and though her stupidity was so unadulterated by any leaven of sense, that she could not avoid accidentally pronouncing that quite right, which her patroness was exhibiting as most absurdly wrong, still her recantation was so immediate on learning her error, and her adoption of a diametrically opposite opinion so ready, that Mrs. Huggins graciously overlooked the fault with a kind injunction to her, "not to be hurt at her own ignorance, because every body in camp knew she could not help it, as it was quite evident her foolishness came into the world with her."

The next in favour, but first in importance, was Mrs. Roland, a widow, and the sister of Captain Summers. Why a female who belongs to this unfortunate class, should remain in India, being entitled to so sufficient a pension, is one of those questions that naturally suggests itself to every body aware of the fact. Mrs. Roland assigned two very sufficient reasons ;—she confessed she liked India ;—the

climate agreed with her, and she found the society so agreeable, that she could never hope to live amongst people who would be equally pleasant;—secondly, if she did not remain to superintend the ménage of her brother, he would positively be ruined!—He was the most careless creature in the world;—thought nothing of his rupees;—allowed his servants to cheat him in the most outrageous manner!—But, above all, she had no near relatives but this beloved brother, and to leave *him*, bereaved as she had been of one so dear, to whom she could not allude without tears, would deprive existence of every charm. She had a heart that considered affection the great sweetener of life, and if deprived of it, her cup would be bitter indeed! The initiated pretended that the widow found affection so necessary to her happiness, that the grand design of her remaining in the East was to secure a second object on whom she might lavish it, and she wisely judged India a more favourable arena for the effort than England,

where portionless dowagers are not more wooed than portionless damsels. Moreover, those said initiated asserted that the harmony of the loving-kindness of the brother and sister, was more frequently disturbed by the recurrence of discords, than consisted with the representations of the lady. It was asserted, that in his convivial moments, Captain Summers had been heard to express his anxious desire that his dear Martha would betake herself to any other domicile than his, and had hinted that he was withholden from enforcing the removal of herself, and all her goods and chattels, only by his dread of offending Mrs. Huggins, who had publicly announced her resolution of getting Mrs. Roland another husband. She said, "The woman, to be sure, was not handsome, but there were many worse, and widows were not so plentiful in India as to be scoffed at. She supposed men expected Mrs. Roland to have performed a SUTTEE for their gratification, they had so much to say about her, poor dear little creature!—For her part she liked

her exceedingly. If there were no good in her, there was no harm: and that was more than could be said of everybody."

These individuals formed the dinner party assembled in the hospitable mansion of Colonel Huggins, on the second day after the entertainment given at the Residency.

CHAPTER V.

“So you are all come, I see,” said Mrs. Huggins, entering the hall when she had kept her visitors waiting at least five-and-twenty minutes, whilst she completed her toilette. “I wish some of you would for once send an excuse, just for the novelty of the thing. I don’t know what you’ll do for dinner parties when Huggins and I are off for Europe, for you can’t fancy he’s to stay here all his life, and be superseded just as those people at Madras please—for such a prig too as Middleton. Mrs. Roland, what a fright you have made of yourself in that new gown! Nature has done enough for you in that line, my dear, you may safely leave her to herself. Mac Wharley, that white jacket of yours bears marks of the dog-

kennel, and I insist on your sending for another. Simms, there is scandal about you in the cantonment; they say your hair and your skin are made to match; cowslip-colour they call the tint of both; what is it like? I know nothing about your English fruits."

"Cowslips are flowers," insinuated Major Bing.

"Don't tell any lies to me, Bing," retorted the lady. "Don't I know they make a slip-slop they call cowslip-wine in England? Summers, did you ever laugh in your life? Look at Mrs. Harding's red nose and begin. Dickey, my dear, what are you waiting for? Are we never to have dinner?—Go and call the butler directly; Summers will be famished into an hysteric if he waits longer. Can none of you speak? You get more stupid every day; I am tired to death of every one of you. If Richard Huggins takes my advice, we shall beat a march before you think of it."

"I will talk," said Major Bing, "with the greatest delight, my dearest Mrs. Huggins, if you will only be so kind as to indulge me with

a plate of soup first ; my inner man is positively in a state of starvation."

" I'll indulge you with two plates of soup, if you will favour me with one word of truth," said Mrs. Huggins with acrimony. " I shall not forget in a hurry your impudent imposture about that Miss Albany !"

" Be merciful," said Bing, imploringly ; " my head was mystified at the time, and I confounded her with Lady Catherine Albany, the daughter of the Earl and Countess of Albany, who are my second cousins on the grandmother's side."

There was a general laugh.

" Upon my word and honour," began Major Bing, but he was interrupted by Captain Summers, who ventured to admonish him that that was not an affirmation to be lightly made by an officer.

" Upon my veracity then—"

The laugh was more vociferous.

" Hold your tongue, Bing, at present, and give somebody else leave to speak. You are always so deucedly talkative, no other soul can

manage to insert a word in your parentheses," said Mrs. Huggins.

"You are very hard on me," replied the Major. "You complain of our silence, and then chide me who am good enough to exert myself to remove the cause of your displeasure."

"You are too obliging; one kind thought for me and a thousand for yourself. However, Dickey, dinner; don't you hear? Take Mrs. Harding. Mrs. Harding, don't be making a fuss; take the Colonel's arm. Summers, come here. Mrs. Roland take Bing—the others are only subalterns. Mac Whalley, have you changed your jacket?—Very well—don't run after Mrs. Roland as if you were going to knock her down. A subaltern won't do for her, let me tell you, whilst there is the least chance of her getting anything better. Simms, you have some of that beastly lavender-water about you. I have a great mind to order you away."

By the time this harangue was finished, the party were seated round the table, and engaged in discussing the soup, an operation so inter-

esting as to engross the eyes and understanding of the whole assemblage.

“Excellent!” said Captain Summers, with all the emphasis of sincerity, as he sent away his plate. “Mrs. Huggins, allow me the pleasure of wine; you will not take beer at present, I presume?”

Mrs. Huggins nodded twice; once in acquiescence, and again as she put the glass to her lips.

“Dickey, mind how you carve that ham,” said the lady with an elevated voice. “You spoiled the last—I hate to have anything at your end of the table that is fit to be eaten. You don’t call that carving I hope; *I* call it mangling. Simms, draw the dish to you and cut it. It is the only chance there is of its being eatable. Colonel, give Simms the knife and fork.”

This was a command after the colonel’s own heart, the very proposition he would have given the world to make, if he had had presumption enough to do so. It was a liberty, however, he never ventured to take in his own house.

He was a BAHADUR only in those of his friends.

“Mrs. Harding,” resumed the lady hostess, now directing her observation to the right side of her table, “I am astonished to see you eating that pilau. It always disagrees with you. I never *will* have one again when you are coming. Boy, take away Mrs. Harding’s plate. Take some of that boiled beef; it will just suit you. Boy, take the pickled limes to Mrs. Harding. Mrs. Roland, are you sending your plate for another slice of ham, the *third*! Some people have stomachs that can digest anything. Simms, are you waiting for beer? Boy, a bottle of beer to Simms saib. Richard Huggins, why don’t you ask Mrs. Harding to take beer? dinner will be done before she gets a glass. Mac Whalley step into the verandah, and see what that bhoi* is about? The punkah scarcely moves, and I am just dying of heat

* A palanquin-bearer. Servants of this class to their other offices add that of *pullers of the punkah*, the large fan, as it may be called, that is suspended from the ceiling, and extends nearly the whole length of the room.

I hate to have hot dishes steaming under one's nostrils so long. Eat as much as you like, even you, Summers, but be quick over it."

Mrs. Huggins's mandate was, as usual, implicitly obeyed by her submissive guests. They understood perfectly well, that as she dined almost entirely on curry, she was anxious that it should make its appearance. As nearly every guest at an Indian table partakes of this national dish, *after* he has done ample justice to more English viands, it is generally brought in as an interlude between the first course and the second, which consists of sweetmeats, that it may be eaten when perfectly hot. Ladies who, like Mrs. Huggins, have been nurtured in the East, prefer it to less piquant comestibles, and, like her, reserve themselves until it is produced.

When Mrs. Huggins's plate was heaped with rice and curry in a manner unguessed at in Europe, every trace of discontent vanished from her brow ; and as she ate, her amiability increased.

"A most excellent curry !" said Captain

Summers wiping his forehead, for his dewy brow testified that it was somewhat *hotter** than usual. But custom had rendered Mrs. Huggins proof against any inconvenience of this kind, and she cordially acquiesced in Captain Summers's remark, being too much engrossed with the object of it to observe the effect it was producing on his countenance.

As soon as Mrs. Huggins had sent away her plate, she felt herself equal to resume her usual fluency of speech, her perpetual *lapsus linguae*, as Doctor Oldham, the licensed punster of the cantonment, characterised her eloquence.

"I think balls the greatest bores in the world," she began, "and I have a great mind never to go to another. Mrs. Roland, for one who dances so much, you dance very ill."

Mrs. Roland, who piqued herself on excelling in this accomplishment, forced a most unpleasant laugh, and parried the polite remark

* In Indian parlance a *hot curry* is an epithet intended to describe one very highly seasoned, about the most trying thing in the world to an English palate.

of her dear friend by the usual "I am sorry you think so."

"I think so! every body thinks so, my dear! Do not flatter yourself that mine is a singular opinion; is it, Mrs. Harding?"

"Why to be sure Mrs. Roland put them all out in a quadrille once or twice, I am obliged to own," said Mrs. Harding with a strong Hibernian accent, not daring to refuse the acquiescence her hostess expected, but at the same time bent on keeping the peace with Mrs. Roland, who could use her tongue as a very offensive weapon on occasion.

"Perhaps you would have me take Mrs. Harding as my model?" said Mrs. Roland blandly, fixing her eyes steadily on the lady *to* whom she spoke, that she might overlook the lady *at* whom she spoke.

"Mrs. Harding! Do you take me for a fool? Mrs. Harding is such a notorious make-sport when she attempts to dance, that she has no character to lose. Besides she is one of your downright people who set grace and all

that kind of nonsense at defiance, don't you, my dear?"

"Yes,"—faintly and reluctantly acquiesced Mrs. Harding.

"You are a sensible woman, for doing so, my dear. Nothing is so trying as to wage a perpetual war against nature. But what are we all staying here for? Mrs. Harding, you would sit at table for ever, if I were not to hint to you to set us at liberty. I wonder you are not tired to death long before this time—I am;" and with this coup-de-main the resistless lady left the dining-hall.

As usual in India, the gentlemen soon followed the ladies, and the sun being now near setting, the whole party betook themselves to their several vehicles to enjoy the benefit of an evening airing, a custom the full luxury of which was most thankfully acknowledged by Mrs. Huggins's guests.

When they re-assembled, the bright and beautiful moon was riding high in the heaven. The cool breeze blew deliciously after the heat of the day, and the whole party seated themselves

in an open verandah to enjoy the full sweetness of an hour which is equalled in no other climate.

They had hardly spoken when the figure of an officer was seen to enter one of the gates of the compound, and saunter carelessly onwards, evidently with an intention of adding to their number.

Mrs. Huggins was the first to recognize him. "It is that wretch, Seymour," said she in perturbation. "I wonder he has the assurance to venture here; I detest him. Mrs. Roland, if you encourage his dangling after you, I give you up, that's all. An impertinent, insolent, conceited, satirical, coxcomb!" The lady's voice sank to a well-bred whisper, its cadence pretty well marking the gradual proximity of the gentleman; an effect so rarely produced on her by the most distinguished individuals, that her courtiers wondered what spell was potent enough thus to subdue her. They might have remembered the reason given by the Frenchwoman of old for her influence over the infamous Catherine de Medicis,—the power of

a strong mind over a weak one. Mrs. Huggins was only audacious, Captain Seymour was courageous, proud, and self-possessed.

“ Good evening, Seymour,” said Colonel Huggins, extending his hand cordially, for he did not particularly dislike a person who occasionally conveyed to his lady the necessary lesson, that she was not quite the first person in this nether world. “ Boy, bring a chair.”

“ Thank you, I came to spend the evening here, if you do not order me away, Mrs. Huggins,” said the unexpected visitor, taking the seat placed for him. “ It has been so hot all day, and I am so worn out and tired, that I came to bestow my dulness on you by way of recreation. Mrs. Huggins, how are you after the ball ?”

“ Always the worse for it ; I hate balls.”

“ I will remember never to invite you to one at my house when *my* day comes. I hope you do not imitate your friend’s aversion, Mrs. Roland ?”

“ Oh, no,—quite the contrary,” said Mrs. Roland eagerly, forgetting in her anxiety to

propitiate Captain Seymour, who was an admirable *parti*, that she must inevitably excite the ire of her dear Mrs. Huggins.

“If you had but a little common sense, child!” exclaimed Mrs. Huggins with a glance of indignation at the culprit, “you ought *not* to like balls, for you always expose yourself; your dancing is horrid.”

“Pardon me if I venture to disagree with you,” said Captain Seymour, with his usual gentleman-like composure. “In imitation of the admirable candour which so eminently characterises you, I must avow that, to my taste, Mrs. Roland’s dancing is just what a lady’s should be, quiet and unostentatious. I am always sorry to see a lady aim at eclipsing an opera-dancer.”

Mrs. Huggins coloured to the very temples, and vexed at her own loss of self-possession, she rallied by a sudden effort, and turned abruptly to Captain Seymour.

“Pray do you mean to marry Mrs. Roland?” she asked sharply.

He raised his eyes and took a slow survey of

her whole person, evidently intending to express that he was assuring himself whether she was absolutely compos mentis. By no means discomposed, he replied deliberately, "I cannot afford it; I am truly sorry for my misfortune. But pray, in return for your very frank question, allow me to ask whether you are empowered to act as Mrs. Roland's appraiser and auctioneer, or to be more intelligible, whether she has employed you to put her up to outcry*? If not, I must confess, although by no means a stranger to your amiable frankness and independent mode of proceeding, *this* is really a little beyond me."

"I suppose, Captain Seymour," said Mrs. Huggins with great acrimony, "you wish to overwhelm me with your English allusions, for the pleasure of exposing my ignorance. I think you excessively rude, let me tell you, and remember that I did not invite you here."

"Certainly not, my dear Mrs. Huggins, or the chances are, you would not have seen me.

* The Indian word for an auction.

I came to remind you of the omission. I like to see my table ornamented with cards of invitation, even when I mean to accept none. I like attention, and as you neglected to pay me any, I am here to punish you, having the satisfaction of knowing, that there is no person in the cantonment that you would not rather encounter. Moreover, your house lies mighty convenient, as an Irishman would say, and I have not had energy enough to make a single call since the ball at the Residency. This, therefore, you see, is my first chance of hearing a female opinion, to which I always defer, of the new belles."

"I know nothing about them; I never spoke to either of them," said Mrs. Huggins petulantly. "I have no idea of Richard Huggins being superseded in the command of the Force by Middleton."

"It is a capital offence, I allow; but we ought, I fancy, to punish Colonel Middleton's seniority in the service as the real offender. So impartial a person as you are, will not,

however, suffer your judgement of his daughter to be warped by this little accident. For my part, I think her pretty."

Captain Seymour was too shrewd not to be aware that throwing out such an opinion was like a view halloo to sportsmen; he knew the rest would open out immediately.

"Pretty!" said Mrs. Huggins with a sneer; "with cheeks the colour of pink noyeau, and eyes like the stripes in a jay's feather."

"I must say I *did* think her good-looking," said Mrs. Roland, meekly; for she knew the bad policy of underrating the beauty of competitors; she therefore "damned with faint praise."

"I hate such wishy-washy faces!" said Mr. Mac Whalley, with his usual good temper. "I say, Captain Seymour, there is more beauty in one of Nelly's pups than in fifty such girls as that."

"I am no dog-fancier," said Captain Seymour, who held Lieutenant Mac Whalley in utter contempt as a savage of the first magnitude. "I shall continue to patronise Miss Middleton notwithstanding. There is something so per-

fectly lady-like and elegant in her demeanour, and those pale gold locks and violet eyes, are such rare beauties in this country, that to *me*, at least, they always seem to place before my eyes a landscape in dear England."

"Every eye shapes its own beauty," said Mrs. Huggins, with the air of a professor.

"Most undoubtedly," said Captain Summers, with implicit acquiescence.

"I dare say the sentiment may be very accurate, but unfortunately it is not quite intelligible," said Captain Seymour, with unequalled *réténue*. "If *every eye shaped its own beauty*, I think very few orbs would be uncivil enough to squint, and that green eyes would be banished from good society."

Captain Summers looked remarkably foolish, and Mrs. Huggins too exasperated to reply.

"Of the two," said Mrs. Harding, breaking a silence unpleasant to some of the party, "I prefer Miss Albany. She is an excessively fine figure."

"Miss Albany is beautiful—decidedly;" said Captain Seymour, more thoughtfully than

the remark seemed to warrant; "but I question if her face would be so long remembered as Miss Middleton's, or recalled with equal delight."

"Colonel Huggins," said his lady, glad to vent her anger on one whom she considered by law as her own "goods and chattels"—"where is the hookah-badar*? That godâk† is intolerable, and he ought to be punished for supplying such stuff; don't smoke another chillum."‡

"Do you find it unpleasant," said her husband; "I thought it particularly agreeable, I must confess."

"I tell you, Colonel Huggins, it is as bad as godâk *can* be; everybody agrees with me."

"I beg leave to differ," said Captain Seymour.

"That is only for the sake of provoking me,

* The servant whose exclusive office it is to keep the hookah in order, and compound the godâk.

† Godâk, the material which is used as tobacco in a pipe.

‡ The quantity used at once. When exhausted, the tile on which it is spread is removed, and being again covered with godâk, replaced.

Captain Seymour," returned the angry lady. "I don't care what anybody thinks. Send the hookah away, Colonel—you're just as obstinate as your old uncle."

This unfortunate kinsman, who had fulfilled a very inferior destiny in India, was the most useful person in the world to Mrs. Huggins. She knew that her pompous husband winced like "a galled jade," when any allusion was made, in the presence of others, to a relative whose name, he hoped, was forgotten by everybody. This was in fact the key-stone of the arch on which Mrs. Huggins's conjugal supremacy rested, and she never failed to avail herself of her useful ally, whenever her will was, for an instant, disputed.

The hookah was sent away immediately, and the discomfited colonel recurred with great empressement to the discussion his lady had interrupted.

"Who knows anything of the Albanys," said he; "where do they come from, and who are they?"

"The family used to visit mine in Eng-

land," said Major Bing; "I remember them perfectly; old Sir George Albany, the grandfather, was alive when I left England. Their seat is in Northamptonshire. This Miss Albany's father married old Norman's sister; he is Sir John Albany,—has fifteen or sixteen children;—one son died at Waterloo. The eldest;—a very fine fellow; I remember him; he gave me many a shilling when I was a boy. I suppose he is poor enough, and really this girl's coming out to the Resident is no bad spec.; she is sure to marry well; if I were out of debt myself, I should not mind taking her, just for the sake of the family."

"That would indeed be marrying well!—" said Captain Seymour, with most intelligible emphasis, whilst Colonel Huggins coughed energetically, and, his hookah being removed, solaced himself with a long pinch of snuff.

"Really you know everybody, I think, Major Bing," said Mrs. Harding, and Colonel Huggins coughed louder than before.

"Yes;—my family connexions are extensive," said the Major, adjusting his cravat and

looking prodigiously grand. "My grandfather, the admiral—"

"The general you mean, man," said Mac Whalley;—"you asserted it at our mess yesterday."

"What an extraordinary mistake, my good fellow!" said Major Bing, too experienced in this kind of attack to be at all discomposed. "Just recall the circumstances; we were talking of the battle of the Nile, you must remember, and I told you the ship of my uncle, the admiral, was distinguished in the action."

"No such thing," said Mac Whalley. "We were talking about Jaffa, and you declared your grandfather, the general, had been there."

"Poh!—poh!" ejaculated Major Bing, his usual interjection when closely pressed, "what has all this to do with Miss Albany?"

"Upon my word, I am trying to discover," said Captain Seymour. "The lady's family is a point of minor interest, when compared with the lady's person."

"In *my* opinion, she is ten times handsomer than Miss Middleton, but more disagreeable manners I never saw," said Mrs. Huggins.

"She just bent her head when she was introduced to me, and stared as if I had been a wild animal. Such airs and graces indeed! But it is always the way with women fresh from Europe."

"A little reserve, one must expect, which, I confess, is rather refreshing after the free and easy manner of a certain class of ladies in the East," said Captain Seymour, perfectly aware that Mrs. Huggins possessed the unbred and unenviable habit of appropriating every general remark.

"I know that to be fresh from Europe covers a multitude of sins in your eyes, Captain Seymour," said Mrs. Huggins; "but you revenge yourself for your forbearance by being doubly severe on old standards like Mrs. Harding and Mrs. Roland. For my part, I thought Mrs. Roland looked quite as handsome as either of the two strangers, and I am sure you must allow, she was much better dressed than Miss Middleton."

"More showily certainly," said Captain Seymour, saving at once his taste and his

politeness. Miss Middleton is so extraordinarily fair, that she would appear to disadvantage in a great variety of colours.—Her simple white satin dress and emeralds were exactly to my taste.”

“The jewels were her mother’s.—I remember them,” said Mrs. Huggins, spitefully.

“Excellent mother, who retires gracefully when her daughter is ready to occupy her place !” said Captain Seymour with feeling.

“Mrs. Middleton is an old woman,” said Mrs. Huggins, who felt the rebuke, and insinuated an excuse.

“Nearly eight-and-thirty, I believe,” replied Captain Seymour, with one of those inexplicable smiles which baffled all Mrs. Huggins’s penetration.

“How old are you ?” questioned the lady, in a manner as rude as even she ever ventured to use.

“Fifteen years Huggins’s junior,—vide the Army List,” replied the imperturbable Captain Seymour.

“I wonder whether Mrs. Norman is pleased

with this addition to her family party," said Colonel Huggins, who did not at all admire the turn the conversation was taking.

"It requires very little penetration to indicate an accurate answer to that surmise," said Captain Summers. — "Mrs. Norman is too pretty herself to endure the constant presence of a beautiful niece."

"Let us hope her purgatory will not be of long duration," said Captain Seymour. "Rely on it, Miss Albany will marry soon and well."

"Don't be too sure," said Mrs. Huggins, "I have seen girls quite as pretty as Miss Albany hang on hand a very long time."

"Perhaps so; however, that will not be *her* case. She has beauty to recommend, and interest to purchase; how many subjects will bend to the omnipotence of her double sceptre!"

So saying, Captain Seymour rose to retire, notwithstanding the pressing instances of Colonel Huggins that he would remain to taste the mulligatawny, which was presently announced.

“ If there is a man in the world I detest beyond all others, it is that disagreeable, conceited, proud, presuming Captain Seymour !” said Mrs. Huggins, when the party had assembled round her supper-table. “ Take notice of my prediction, all of you ; if Seymour does not marry one of these newly arrived girls, it will not be his own fault.”

“ Depend on it you are mistaken,” said Major Bing. “ Seymour was desperately attached to a girl who came out to India ten years ago,—in fact a third or fourth cousin of my own. I don’t like to allude to the subject in his presence, because I know it must be painful to him. A charming girl ! As far superior to these two, as an imperial butterfly to a moth. She died suddenly of cholera, and Seymour suffered dreadfully. In fact many people thought his head had become permanently affected ; *verbum sat*—such reports are dangerous, and this of course is quite *entre nous*.”

“ It will become harmless as soon as your name is appended to it,” said Mrs. Huggins with a sneer. “ As to these girls, thank heaven

their success is nothing to *me*. It concerns aspirants after matrimony,—Mrs. Rowland among the rest. What do you look at me in that way for, child; don't you suppose every body in the cantonment knows as well as I do, that you would be married if you could?"

And rising from the table the lady retired, leaving her guests to depart at their leisure.

CHAPTER VI.

“So this is a ball at a Residency, a diplomatic ball in India!” said Miss Albany to Miss Middleton. “One hundred men, and twenty women!—*such* men and women! Florence, saw you ever the like?”

“I am afraid I have no taste for very large parties.”

“Oh no! surely not!—You prefer the sublimity of solitude; the companionship of the stars; the voice of the air! As I am not one of your extraordinarily gifted beings, I cannot affect to hold in contempt amusements so well suited to my age and station.”

“Surely I did not insinuate anything like contempt; I had no idea of despising the tastes of other people when I asserted my own.

Apparently, even in your estimation the fatigue was not repaid by the pleasure."

"Not in this instance, certainly. And yet I *was* amused,—yes, there is no denying it; I certainly was amused! My lady aunt so magnificent! My uncle so lordly! Colonel Huggins—I think they call the *ci-devant* military chief, whom your father has despoiled of his honours—so pompous, the turkey-cock of the farm-yard! His wife!—oh, his wife! Cruickshanks, that thou didst but see her!"

"She is very gauche, certainly, but one could forgive her personal awkwardness, if her manners had less pretension. Her voice is absolutely terrific."

"Consider, my dear, she has had to dragoon a whole force—a little army. It requires some lungs to exercise the functions appertaining to that appointment!—I quite doat on her.—She is a person to whom one can be uncivil in the certainty of ensuring the gratitude of at least nine-tenths of her acquaintance. Do not you see, that she is feared merely because she has the audacity to be ten times ruder than any

other person, and that the point of her repartees depends entirely on their gross personality, or on a still more objectionable quality?"

"Then she addresses every gentleman by his surname, as if she were speaking to her footman. I never witnessed anything like the coarseness of her manner."

"For once, in traducing an enemy, you are a very efficient aid-du-camp!"

"*An enemy!* Mrs. Huggins cannot possibly be your's or mine."

"Are you so very a novice, that you do not discern in her an enemy to every woman who has more beauty, youth, or accomplishment than herself; anything, in short, which is likely to contest the ascendancy she evidently enjoys in society?"

"Can you suppose that *such* a person actually enjoys an ascendancy in any civilized society in the world?"

"I am sure of it. I suspected it when I saw the numbers who flocked to pay her homage on her entrance into the banqueting-

room, and the result of my inquiries was a confirmation of my suspicions. I immediately repeated in the voiceless depths of my own thoughts—‘ My sentence is for open war, O Peers !’ and having decided on that avenue to celebrity, I noticed my introduction to her only by a cold bow, sufficient to have frozen even the red-hot tip of Mrs. Harding’s nasal appendage.”

“ But who was your informer ? ”

“ A very decent kind of person, who gazed on both of us—you and myself I mean—right lovingly, as if he should say—

‘ How happy could I be with either,
Were t’ other dear charmer away ! ’

I mean Captain Seymour.”

“ I remember him very well,—a handsome, dark man, tall and elegant.”

“ You *remember him very well*—a handsome, dark man, tall and elegant ! Ah, Florence, Florence, what would mamma say to such a confession ? Have you so soon chosen your

parti, or have you had a gentle hint on the subject?"

"*I* thought only of Captain Seymour as a guest in a ball-room, whereas *you* seem to see in every man a lover," said Florence, highly offended. "Mamma would say that my confession, as you call it, was not of a nature to warrant your indelicate remark."

"And mamma would be right, so let that admission be my apology," said Harriet, tapping the cheek of her companion with that playful grace which one, more practised in the polish of courts than Florence, might have found irresistible. "Let us proceed with our anatomy of character. How amiably sweet my excellent aunt looked on Mrs. Huggins,—did you remark it? No hyæna could have smiled more tenderly! — What civilities were interchanged,—and oh, how devoutly did they hate each other!"

"Yes; I witnessed their too cordial greeting, and interpreted it as you have done."

"Propitious be the hour, as the orientals

say ; I verily believe we shall arrive at last, by a good deal of subtraction and addition, to a perfect unanimity of opinion. Let us try again. Mrs. Roland, the widow, for instance, who was pointed out to me by that aforesaid elegant Captain Seymour. She may be considered a sort of competitor, you know, for she is looking out for a husband as,—I will not say *you* and I,—but simply as *I* am.”

“ She is a very pretty woman, I think, but I heard her permit Mrs. Huggins to speak to her in a tone of such uncivil command, that I liked her much less afterwards.”

“ Right, my dear ;—never admire a woman who permits the least deviation from the respect due to her from *each* sex. That same Captain Seymour, who gave me in short the *carte du pays*, says she is absolutely Mrs. Huggins’s toady.”

“ Poor thing, what an office !”

“ Yes, it is the reverse of a sinecure, nothing to do and large pay, for *she* has *no* pay, and if not much to do, at least much to suffer. I dislike my respected aunt rather less, since I am

aware of the unappeasable strife that exists between her and this horrible Mrs. Huggins,—the tigress as they call her,—don't stare, it is absolutely her *nom de société*."

"At least it is satisfactory that there are so many really elegant and well-bred women in a society of which we are to form a part. Three or four were as graceful and as lovely as one could desire."

"Women in general are not particularly strenuous in their desires on that point. They find foils a very good substitute for companions, I fancy. In this country beauty is estimated at its full value, I have the happiness of observing. Do not smile; neither you nor I are blind to our own attractions, nor insensible to the effect they produce. I heard much in England of the attention, the devotion paid to our sex in India, and for once I find the picture was not overwrought. To be sure, in this country, where *les beaux yeux de ma cassette* are out of the question, inasmuch as that said *cassette* rarely contains more than the lady's *trousseau*, our own veritable *beaux yeux*

shine with undiminished lustre. I shall be sadly dull, Florence, when you leave us. The Colonel positively means to quit the Residency next week."

"Positively; and, but for our separation, I should look forwards with delight to the prospect of being settled *at home*."

"After all, I must regret that Madras was not our place of abode. And looking to ultimate results,—I will not again shock your delicacy, I allude only to myself,—I really think it might have been rather more advantageous if I had been allowed to remain there."

"We have seen so much of this new country during our long journey, that I cannot regret it."

"Minarets, mosques, pagodas and plantains, jungles and deserts, are very well in their way, but they might have been viewed hereafter. I assure you I have made the most minute inquiries that could, with any propriety, be hazarded, and I protest to you, I do not find there is a single man here—either at the Residency, or in the cantonment—whose alliance

would be at all worth the trouble and turmoil of a voyage of fifteen thousand miles, or a journey of *one* thousand."

"We can afford to wait."

"*Wait!*—in India!—My dear child, you are a perfect griffin.—See how readily I adopt the phraseology of the country!—To wait is to despair. After the first bloom has vanished, an evil that comes to pass very speedily beneath a tropical sun,—consider how much one's value is depreciated!—No; if a woman is not married within six months after her landing, she must lower her expectations very considerably. But *àpropos des bottes*,—what do you think of 'honest John Tomkins,' the first assistant to the Resident?"

"He says so little, and always appears so thankful not to be noticed, that for the sake of obliging him, I have scarcely looked at him since I made my introductory curtsey."

"Would you believe, that my respected and respectable uncle, has seriously pointed him out as a fitting object at which to aim the full artillery of my charms? He assures me, that

beneath that dull exterior there lies a fountain of feeling and intelligence, which the magic of my smiles might cause to gush forth most delightfully. Moreover, he hints,—*diplomates*, in the east or west, never do more you know,—that, in the event of *his* retirement, no improbable contingency, honest John will assuredly succeed to all the honour and glory of being Resident at Kirkpore, when he may accumulate lacs of rupees* at leisure; and when he is satisfied with the amount of the aggregate, may return to England to astonish the world with his display of eastern splendour, and exhibit at the court of his Britannic Majesty, a countenance dyed yellow by the united influence of curry, bile, and mulligatawny.”

“And what do you think of the prospect?”

“I like every part of it but *the man*.—To be sure there *are* considerations—” said Miss Albany, thoughtfully,—“love and romance never figured amongst the items of *my* calculations;—honest John has his good points;—if

* One lac is £10,000.

he were Resident *in esse* instead of *in posse*, matters might wear a different aspect. But to be subordinate to my aunt is not to be thought of, especially as she would probably be so delighted with it as to exert all her influence with her liege lord to prolong my torments by remaining. And then to be Mrs. Tomkins—Mrs. John Tomkins,—I, who have hitherto listened with delight to the euphonious announcement of *Miss Albany*.—No, no—it is not to be thought of,—at least, not until I am a little more *au fait* of the actual state of things.”

“But if he be so amiable and so talented, your resolution may possibly be shaken.”

“No, *mon enfant* ;—hearts, if there be such things, are rarely won by talent and temper ;—*mine* is accessible only by a striking person, a graceful address, and the art *de raconter bien*, as the French call it. Poor John Tomkins will be a shy, silent, awkward man to the end, let him fall into whose hands he may, and that is precisely the failing I cannot tolerate. Addison, able to draw a bill for a thousand

pounds, with no ready cash in his pocket, would have been my abhorrence notwithstanding his Spectator."

"After all, the poor man's destiny appears to be in the hands of Mr. Norman, who, if he be very anxious to see you *Mrs. Tomkins*, may resign, on condition of your immediately accepting that style and title."

"But one little preliminary remains to be settled. He is far from being satisfied that honest John has any matrimonial designs whatever,—far less that they are concentrated on one individual. Indeed, my uncle affects to think, that his friend is invulnerable to a whole galaxy of beauties, and that let my inclinations regarding him be as favourable as they might, I should have a very remote chance of success. This, you will allow, is somewhat *piquant* to a beauty by profession and practice, and might authorise one's indulging a little coquetry merely to avenge the slight offered to our sex."

"But consider the shock poor Mr. Tom-

kins's peace of mind might sustain, since you have positively decided against him."

"Do not be too confident of that, my dear. *If* Mr. Norman *should* really and veritably make a proposal of immediate retirement,—*if* honest John Tomkins *should* thaw beneath the fire of my irresistible eyes,—*if* said honest John Tomkins *should* prove worth *actually* the certain number of lacs at which mine uncle hinted, and be in the immediate prospect of tripling the amount in a very short time,—why—at least it would be wise to suspend any positive judgment, for after all, *c'est selon*."

"We never *shall* understand each other, that is evident," said Florence with a sigh.

"Should I be more intelligible if I were to tell you, that I really consider Captain Seymour one of the most agreeable and fascinating persons I have ever met with?—that there is a depth in his dark eyes which one cannot venture to penetrate,—a *poetry of expression*, I suppose you would call it?—If *he* were in the position of Mr. Tomkins, do you believe I should have a moment's hesitation in deciding on the irre-

proachable excellence of such a parti?—Can you not imagine, that *my* eagerness to attain it might outstrip even Mr. Norman's?"

"If it were possible to believe that a strong attachment could be formed in so very short a time, I should ask you, why you object to encourage the obvious preference of Captain Seymour, who, if not so advantageously situated as Mr. Tomkins, yet holds a good position,—quite sufficient to satisfy any moderate desires?"

"But mine are *not* moderate, Florence," said Miss Albany, with decision. "Neither education nor habit have tended to render them so. I did not visit India with any intention of circumscribing views never very limited,—of lowering an appreciation of *self*, never very humble. If the Fates had permitted indeed,—if Captain Seymour had occupied the position in which perverse Destiny has placed the odious Tomkins,—or if he had been nearer the higher grades of his own profession,—in short, if Fortune had been as favourable to Captain Seymour as nature and education, even *I* might have 'wished that heaven had made me such

a man !'—And even then I might have wished in vain. There is no reasoning on the taste or inclinations of man."—She paused.—"By the way," she resumed rather abruptly, "Captain Seymour enjoyed a tolerably long tête-à-tête with you at supper;—if it be not encroaching on the privileges of a flirtation, what topic did you find so mutually interesting?"

"*You*—and Mrs. Norman."

"What an unnatural junction!—And how did he contrive to render so meagre a subject interesting—*so* interesting as to engage you to that devoted attention with which you honoured him?"

"He said, Mrs. Norman was so pretty as to have enjoyed all the homage due to a beauty, and that you were too handsome not to divert a considerable proportion into another channel;—which, he apprehended, might lead to consequences so disagreeable, as to render the Residency not the most pleasant abode in the world to one so lovely and elegant as Miss Albany."

"*Positively*!—If he could but divine how absolutely and perfectly independent are Miss

Albany's peace and pleasure of the caprice of any such person as Mrs. Norman!—No, no;—the bite of a mosquito is annoying, but it does not destroy the constitution. I have the vanity to imagine, Miss Albany can render the Residency quite as unpleasant to Mrs. Norman, as Mrs. Norman can possibly render it to Miss Albany.—If this were the subject matter of your long tête-a-tête, it was much less interesting than I imagined.”

“Do not suppose that single opinion was the limit of Captain Seymour's remarks. I found him much more agreeable than any other person to whom I spoke during the evening.”

“Say'st thou so, pretty Florence?” said Miss Albany with an embarrassment incomprehensible to her companion.—“We are going to dinner this moment, I perceive:—one parting word of admonition. *As a friend*, I really advise you to indulge this preference no further without the permission of mamma.”

CHAPTER VII.

GRATEFUL as they were for the unbounded hospitality of the Resident of Kirkpore, the Middleton family were by no means dissatisfied with finding themselves *at home* in one of the best houses of the Cantonment. It was a building of pukka-work, in the language of the country,—that is, of brick, covered over with a coating of chunam, which gave it a most respectable appearance. Unlike the generality of bungalows in up-country stations, it had a story above the ground-floor. Its external character was in the highest degree *gentleman-like*; a square centre, flanked by two semicircular concave wings, each adorned with a pillared portico defending a noble door, opening into a spacious verandah that directly

intersected the interior of the mansion. There was a dining-hall, a drawing-room, a ladies' room, a set of sleeping apartments, and numerous corner rooms, very well calculated for bachelor visitors,—below ;—and above, proportionate accommodation, with the additional luxury of glass windows,—a thing not very common in every part of India, and at this particular station, an article in the progress of civilization not especially in demand.

The compound was unusually extensive. There was a flower garden, so enclosed that the most jealous baboo * in existence might allow the fair inhabitants of his zenanah to recreate themselves therein at discretion. There was also a compound so extensive as to render it impossible to class it in the lawn genus, but too limited to be denominated a park. A plantation of plantains occupied sundry square feet of its dimensions, and an ample garden, rich in all the fruit and vegetables for which the east is famous, completed its appliances for comfort. An unequalled bowrie† and capital

* A Hindoo gentleman, or merchant.

† Well.

stabling added greatly to its advantages, whilst its dog kennels had often drawn a sigh of envy from that great patron of the canine species, Ensign Simms.

Florence was very speedily placed in possession of the ladies' room, dignified hence-forwards with the style and title of Miss Middleton's boudoir. There her piano and harp were placed, when the extraordinary fact was ascertained, that they had suffered no greater dilapidation on their journey than the loss of two or three strings, which Florence replaced most satisfactorily; Mrs. Middleton having been careful that she should acquire the art of tuning her own piano, an accomplishment absolutely essential in a country where the chances are ten to one against your procuring any other person who is able or willing to do it for you.

Florence was speedily convinced that it was possible to be quite as happy in India as in England. The beloved child of sensible parents, all that could be done for her comfort, — to supply occupation, — to mitigate the dangers of the climate, — *was* done. She saw quite as

much society,—even more than she desired, and, if associating occasionally, which, in Colonel Middleton's position, was a matter of necessity, with all, she had the enjoyment of more select parties composed entirely of the *élite* of the place,—people of both sexes, whose value was estimated by their cultivation, sense, and worth, not by the accident of their rank. Florence had seen little of the English world, and she had no opportunity of comparing the circles of which she at present formed a member, with the coteries of the metropolis. But in the presence of an officer so distinguished for his honourable character as Colonel Middleton, none of the occasional asperities of Indian society rose to the surface, so that the chivalry which must necessarily characterise a *monde*, essentially military, was the more apparent. Moreover, people who have much leisure and few temptations in the way of public amusement, are, absolutely, driven to books, for even a hookah cannot be smoked all day; and light as the description of reading may be, it is better than no reading at all. To a per-

son, therefore, much better acquainted with the middling classes of her native country than Florence, there would have been little apparent inferiority. No comparison can be more unfair than that sometimes instituted between an Indian cantonment and a provincial town in the mother country, to which, from the nature of things, it must be immeasurably superior. Here is nothing sordid; — all around has a tendency to substitute for the common places of existence, elevating and picturesque associations. The very anxieties of a military career have no tendency to narrow the mind, like those attendant on mercantile or professional speculations. The *ton* in Indian society is immeasurably superior to that of any country-town in England. Every officer is so conscious of his responsibility to superior authority for any gross dereliction from the conduct of a gentleman,—and he is so well aware of the influence character must exercise on his reception amongst the more polished of the other sex—that he is generally attentive to all those *bienséances* of which the provincials of England are, for

the greater part, completely unobservant.— Mrs. Huggins's set was of her own forming, and was the exception that proves the rule.

If Florence showed a preference for any individual amongst the crowd who, at this juncture, made it their pastime to contend for her smiles, it was certainly in favour of Captain Hyde Seymour. His attentions were of that kind which are constantly *felt*, but never obtrusive. The quiet elegance of his manner was perfect; his conversation was in the highest degree captivating, — playful, — intelligent, — animated. — Moreover, in his address to women, there was that peculiar softness, which allowed the one he was specially addressing, to believe herself the single object by whom that dangerous softness was inspired. Colonel Middleton had hitherto known nothing of him, for Seymour had been on the general staff of a former commander-in-chief at Bengal, and had been banished, as he called it, to the *ultima thule* of the cantonment of Kirkpore, on the departure of Lord ———, who, however, by procuring for

him the best staff-appointment at the station, had enabled him to convert his residence into a kind of Tusculum, where he enjoyed in perfection the *otium cum dignitate*. Some of the prettiest women of the place affected to consider him a *mauvais sujet*, but notwithstanding this little scandal, they were extremely solicitous to obtain his attention, so obviously indeed, that Colonel Middleton held him excused, if he exhibited occasionally just sufficient self-complacency to justify the charge of coxcombry occasionally brought against him. As an officer, he was unexceptionable. During the brief period of Colonel Huggins's holding the office of brigadier, the whole staff had, by turns, been the objects of his anger and reprimands, Captain Seymour excepted; who, punctiliously entrenching himself in the minute observance of military etiquette, and never allowing himself, on any occasion, to be betrayed into cordiality or intimacy, contrived to sustain a very dignified rôle, and to assume an attitude of superiority, even when he most scrupulously ad-

hered to those forms which are established, as the chevaux-de-frise in which the most insignificant dignitary is to find a body-guard.

Captain Seymour, enjoying high estimation from all around, had not selected any confidential friend amongst the intimates who frequently surrounded his splendid table. Perhaps he was one of those who did not choose to feel themselves committed, in any degree, with a person to whose eye he must constantly be exposed. His correspondents were numerous, and of the very first class in India. That he unbosomed himself with comparative frankness to one, at least, amongst them, may be gathered from the following letter:—

“MY DEAR CHIDLEY,

“It is really almost incumbent on me to maintain a dignified silence, seeing that you have vouchsafed no reply to my last most voluminous and most entertaining communication. Why so idle a fellow as I am should trouble himself to write under such circumstances, and with a hot wind blowing like the breath of a

thousand fiends, is a mystery to myself, which I shall not take the additional trouble of attempting to solve. Man may be defined as an inconsistent animal, under which piece of philosophy I shall shelter the otherwise not-to-be-extenuated atrocity of boring a man with a second letter, who has not thought fit to notice my first.

“ Since my arrival here I have been constantly labouring to impress you with the conviction, that this is the dullest hole on the face of the universal world ; consequently, it would have been as refreshing as a first shower in the monsoon to have read one of your vivid sketches of the brilliant doings in the marvellous City of Palaces. However, henceforwards I shall not depend so entirely on my friends for a resource against blue devils and similar ugly attendants. The face of things has changed, and, as it may be demonstrated that what is at the worst cannot possibly vary without improvement, you may gather, that I am not quite so likely to be driven to the suicidal practice of cheroots and brandy-pawnee, as I was some three months since.

“ That monster, Huggins, of whom I favoured you with a full-length portrait ages ago, is, thank heaven, superseded. His successor *pro tempore*,—a long *tempus* may it prove,—is one of those few old officers who unite the characters of officer and gentleman. Moreover, he has a graceful and accomplished wife, who renders a *soirée* at his house perfectly refreshing. I suspect you are conjecturing that this sentence furnishes the key to all the excellences which I see in her husband. But you are at fault, Chidley, *upon honour*. One sentence will convince you;—they have a daughter—*such a daughter!* ‘Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip,’ and if I were not writing for my own especial gratification, I could find in my heart to torment you with a month’s suspense, by terminating my letter with this precise period.

“ Picture to yourself a creature between child and woman,—playful, coy, innocent as the first, but full of lofty thoughts and sustained principle, as the *last should* be. Fancy an eye deeply blue, from which you seem to *drink in* love and delight, such as higher and holier

beings might inspire. Then—her complexion! This fierce sun of the east has not yet melted away that delicate bloom, ever varying like the tints of the sun-set, or the hues of the waters, or any other ever changing but ever beautiful thing. Her mouth is the loveliest I ever saw; her forehead lofty and polished as Parian marble, unstained but by the pencilled traces of azure veins over the temples. Above this is a profusion of glossy hair, that absolutely glitters like pale gold, in the sun-beam. Thus far her beauty will bear criticism, and that her features are not entirely regular, I think almost an advantage to her countenance. How perfect simplicity is compatible with the most intense expression of intellect, is, I confess, unintelligible by any ordinary description; but he who looks on the face of Florence sees the demonstration of the fact. And her voice! Is there not a beauty in the sweet harmony of woman's voice more thrilling than the divinest features? There is music in every sound that escapes the lips of this gracious being. And yet,—confess, Chidley,—that the portraiture hath altogether more *purity* than might suffice to

preserve the senses of one so *blasé* as your friend, from its fascinations.

“ Marriage with me is out of the question, unless some of those princesses that glitter in oriental legends, with talismans that lay open the treasures of the golden mountain and call forth the gems hidden in the bowels of the earth, should own herself penetrated with my *irresistibility*. Marriage is a luxury so expensive as to be quite beyond the reach of a man whose debts exceed, by some thousands, that pleasant monosyllabic sum total, a lac. The innocence of this gentle girl is her safe-guard. Disbelieve me, if you please, but my intercourse with her is such as might become a brother with his most cherished sister. If I have hitherto been wicked enough to wish to win hearts I never meant to wear, they were hearts cast in a mould altogether different from the holy and stainless one of this sweetest maiden. There is a spell about her that should preserve her from all danger, and through *me*, at least, none shall approach her.

“ I know very well all you are saying, and

all you are feeling, Chidley. You deride my fastidiousness, and distrust my intentions. You resolve to believe, that I have not yet relinquished the amusing game of breaking hearts, and that when I am tolerably certain of having interested the fairy Florence, I shall find in her an hundred imperfections, which will, in my own judgment, justify my fickleness. But you are wrong altogether. If ever woman was born to inspire true and unpolluted love in the heart of man, *she* is that woman, and if I dared venture on matrimony, believe me I have seen the being whom I should deem more than worthy of the honours of my right hand.

“ ‘All this sentiment,’ you will exclaim, ‘may serve to beguile existence of its tedium, but cannot be particularly amusing.’ As a rare instance of good fortune in a Mofussil station, learn that Kirkpore at present is brilliant with the charms—laden with the destinies—of two unmarried beauties. Colonel Middleton brought out with him the niece of Mr. Norman, the Resident, who is, to say sooth, as bright a

butterfly as ever tempted man to a chase on an English summer's day.

“Miss Middleton is only a little lower than the angels, but this other girl—Harriet Albany—is a gay and glorious thing, with a body breathing of paradise, and a soul formed by the atmosphere of this lower world. Full of *espièglerie*,—of coquetry,—with a smile and a greeting for every body—she pursues her laughing career unimpeded by the gravity that checks the progress of less buoyant spirits. And, in fact, Chidley, although I know you will pronounce me an egregious coxcomb, there is that in the eye of the fair Harriet, when perchance our glances meet, that convinces me, your friend Seymour might, as far as she is concerned, be *un homme à meilleures fortunes*.

“But it must not be! A flirtation, indeed, to amuse an idle hour withal, is not so pregnant with danger as to be shunned. This is just the *rôle* for which nature or education has fitted the beautiful Harriet; the *marrying* man who has purchased wisdom by experience, would choose for his wife, Florence, that gentle

girl, who has not yet entered on the rudiments of flirtation, but as affairs stand, a little sentiment and a good deal of coquetry with Harriet, is the less dangerous game for me. I have still sufficient modesty left to believe, that my occasional attentions to her friend will not *quite* break the heart of the angel Florence, for I assure you mine is not hard enough voluntarily to deal forth the slightest affliction to hers. Trifling with all, accessible to every body, capricious as the sea, changeable as the moon, Miss Albany is a person with whom one may flirt *à l'outrance*, without committing any misdemeanour punishable in the high court of conscience. Pray, Chidley, how far do you think one may venture with a coquette without being guilty of high treason against the laws of honour, for which one is bound to have a consideration, especially when they are backed by the influence potential of so very influential a personage as the Resident of Kirkpore?

“To render a flirtation with the fair Harriet more piquant, I can see, in my mind's eye, a doughty hero, known by the thrice horrible

name of John Tomkins, whom her dignified relative would most gladly persuade her into wooing as a husband. You may, perchance, incline to think that there is some mal-arrangement in my phrase, but if you do, you will be deceived. I write advisedly; I acquit Tomkins himself of any such malice prepense against society, as would be implied by his meditating on engrossing the heart and person of *la belle Harriet*; but the uncle, the *burrah sahīb*, has an eye, I can discover, to prospective contingencies, and viewing the said Tomkins as his probable successor, would be glad to secure to his niece, a full participation of all the honours and advantages of the Residency of Kirkpore. What a pleasure to thwart designs so sinister to the well-being, and derogatory to the sentiment of the beautiful Harriet! How delightful to encounter the frowns of mine uncle, the pertness of mine aunt, in such a career! And if the man,—the husband in perspective,—has really any such tender ideas,—what ecstasy to convulse his diaphragm with a spasm of jealousy, which should deepen his already mulliga-

tawny countenance to a hue of inveterate orange tawny ! Have you lost all taste for a triumph of this kind, or would you absolve me for essaying to achieve it, without being prompted by any more powerful motive than the desire of rendering the flavour of this Indian existence as piquant as circumstances permit me to do !

“ It is unfortunate, that ten miles of the Company’s highway intervene between the Residency and the cantonment. I cannot absent myself from official duties every day, nor should I choose to submit voluntarily to the loss of the smiles of Florence for any long period. See to what a strait your unhappy friend is reduced ! All the laughing graces call me there,—all the *lovelinesses* of woman keep me here. Were I to ask for a month’s leave, I might quarter myself on half the Kirkpore people, who are always glad of a visitor ; but, in the meantime, how can I be secure that some confounded coxcomb will not rob me of the smiles of Florence in my absence ? And yet that day *must* come ; however, I would

fain defer it until I have committed the first yawn in her society. When that shall have occurred, let him win her who may.

“ Confess that I send you a volume more than usually interesting, and for once, pay me in kind. Stagnation in the stream of my existence has, you see, ceased for the present. There is at least a bubble or two on the surface. Another is also rising, but of inferior interest. Our races are next Tuesday, and I have a few thousand rupees depending on the speed of my famous ‘ High-flyer.’ Wish me success, for the sake of my creditors, to whom more than the possible amount of my winnings is mortgaged.

“ Yours ever,

“ HYDE SEYMOUR.”

The precise hour spent by Captain Seymour, in writing the preceding letter, was passed by Miss Middleton in reading the following:—

“ How do you like these hot winds, my dearest Florence? I hope you have got plenty of cuscus-tatties* about your house, a hope, to

* Mats made of fragrant grass, which, during the hot

be sure, which I need hardly trouble myself to entertain, considering how experienced an Indian the dear good papa is. Every thing here is as well arranged as luxury and the desire of being comfortable can make it, nevertheless, I find the weather utterly insupportable. My mirror tells me that I am losing my complexion, and rouge will never supply the departed brilliancy of my defunct roses. My eyes are heavy with the languor that oppresses me, and my countenance stupid from that listlessness and apathy which has taken possession of my whole being. To be idle is the only possible state of existence, as, I suppose, even your industrious little self experiences.

“The cantonment people very seldom vouchsafe to look at us during this terrible weather. If they visit the Residency at all, it is in the evening, when I prefer the open air to the most intellectual being that ever cheated the hours with ‘colloquy divine.’ A morning visitor, laden with gossip, would be inva-
winds, are placed in the door-ways and kept constantly wet, so that the air cools as it passes through them.

luable, but, alas ! I may sigh for such in vain ! None venture near us at mid-day, save the indefatigable and much to be respected John Tomkins, who, loaded as he may be with sense, is no medium for the conveyance of gossip, and is as little amusing as any thing bipedical ever was known to be, in this nether world.

“ And yet, sooth to say, dear Florence, honest John’s attentions just now, when the thermometer stands at boiling heat, are rather more endurable than at other seasons, when beaux like butterflies begin to shake their gorgeous plumage in the more wholesome air. If we had hot winds blowing all the year round, I will not swear that I should not be ready to accept said honest John, with all his appendages of sense, goodness, and wearisomeness, at the end of the third quarter. *You*, my dear child, who are in a situation where men can gain access to you without the risk of martyrdom by grilling on the way, can have no idea of the value of a man who is ready to take his chance even of that horror for the sake of your beaux yeux. Do tell all this to that

wretch Seymour, who has not honoured the Residency with a single call since the last dinner-party, which occurred a fortnight since. I suppose you see him almost every day. Of course he is not unmannerly enough to laud you to the skies in my presence. I give him credit for more tact than thinking it possible to please one woman by the praises of another. Rumour, my dear, is busy with the names of both of you, and I cannot think how it comes to pass, that with mamma's discretion and papa's vigilance, rumour should have had the power of making free with your name at all.

“ My amiable aunt is tenfold more amiable, now that she is necessarily compelled to exist without that tribute of adulation which I verily believe to be an indispensable aliment to the nourishment of the slightest possible modicum of good-humour, in that nursery of bile and all its concomitants, which she is pleased to call her mind. I assure you our tête-à-têtes could not be otherwise than amusing to a disinterested bystander. She so spiteful—I so witty!—She occasionally ridiculing honest John, and

again lauding him to the skies, accordingly as she sees I am inclined to use him well or abuse him shamefully, her approbation and disapprobation increasing always in an inverse ratio to my own! You, my dear Florence, who are quite ignorant of the pleasures of perverseness, will hardly be able to understand that, during this present season, the great alleviation to my sufferings is the delight of tormenting my aunt.

“ My respected uncle is,—not to speak it profanely,—in some matters rather too absurd. At day-break this morning, as I ventured to peep through the venetians, I saw a line of camels unloading on the endless plain over which our prospect on *my* side of the Residency extends; pleased with the novelty, and prompted by a certain feminine curiosity, I remained at my post of observation, long enough to watch the erection of a single-poled tent, and to witness the arrival of somebody in a blue jacket, who dismounted from his horse with a grace *fait à ravir*, and discernible even at the distance which separated me from the cavalier—the more the pity! When I entered the

breakfast-room, of course I expected to obtain a nearer view of said cavalier, and felt that my *recherchée* toilette had been terribly thrown away, when I saw the marvellously unpleasant countenances of mine honoured uncle and aunt facing each other, like the *tête-a-têtes* in the old magazines. As soon as I had seated myself, I ventured to communicate the fact of there being a new arrival in the vicinity, and had the satisfaction of finding my intelligence quite ancient, inasmuch as my worthy uncle was not only in possession of it, but of sundry particulars explanatory of the suspension of the usual hospitalities of the Residency. He had discovered the traveller to be the Honourable Lieutenant Henry Travers, a son of Earl D——; just now under the displeasure of the sublime government of Madras, for some reason enveloped in such a mass of military mystification, that with all my desire to be *au fait* of the matter, I was quite unable to arrive at a glimpse of the meaning of my excellent uncle, who, when under the access of a diplomatic fit, rejoices more in important nods and shakes of

the head,—and humphs! and has! pregnant with unutterable meaning, if one could but get at it,—than the whole cluster of officials in Downing Street taken together.

“ I ventured sundry questions relative to the actual circumstances of Mr. Travers,—such as the number of his regiment, why he was at Kirkpore, whence he had come, and whether he was to remain. My first query obtained a tolerably satisfactory answer—he belongs to the — Light Cavalry. But imagine my disgust at the absurd simplicity of his Pomposity’s reply to my second! He was at Kirkpore because government had directed him to proceed there! There was a reason palpable for you; plain as,—to use a vulgar, but in this case particularly appropriate simile,—the immense nasal appendage that adorns my uncle’s frontispiece! *Why* did the government send him here? Ay, there’s the rub! The light the diplomatic Resident proceeded to throw on the subject, was just sufficient to make darkness visible,—to prove to me, the uninitiated,—‘ all that I

know is, nothing can be known!’ Furthermore, I learnt that his remaining is uncertain, being dependent on the pleasure of the said most enlightened, most liberal, and most accountable government, which, as far as I can discover, will be regulated by his conduct. I suppose, therefore, as soon as the poor youth—he must be a youth I conclude; his subalternship seems to vouch for that fact;—is tolerably comfortable, he will be convicted of the sin of being easy under the displeasure of his thrice honourable superiors, and will be favoured with an order to proceed elsewhere.

“This, my dear Florence, is the gist of my epistle. You will be able, I dare say, to throw a little light on a subject in which I am interested in exact proportion to the difficulty I find in penetrating its mysteries. People, I suppose, do not affect diplomacy in the cantonment. Write to me by this day’s tappal, if possible, for I am dying to hear from you.

“Do not forget my hint to Seymour. I am looking forwards with delight to the prospect of

our meeting, after the first shower of the monsoon, if we survive the fury of these fierce winds.

“Yours ever,

“HARRIET ALBANY.”

CHAPTER VIII.

COLONEL MIDDLETON, old officer as he was, was not distinguished by that unbounded veneration for "the powers that be," which, whenever their decisions did not affect his own particular interests, characterised the Resident of Kirkpore.

Mr. Travers had, of course, called on the officer commanding the force, to report his arrival, and he had been received in a manner that had not the least tendency to force on his mind the unpleasant position in which he stood. Relieved, therefore, from a natural feeling of embarrassment, he had been able to do justice to himself, and the frank, manly address, and exceedingly gentleman-like manners which so remarkably distinguished him, were allowed to produce their full effect.

His *official* call had been succeeded by a less formal visit to the ladies of the Colonel's family, who, little likely as they were to be biassed by a sudden and violent prepossession, were by no means insensible to the indescribable charm which invested his whole bearing, and singled him out so decidedly from the general mass of mankind.

Colonel Middleton had private and especial reasons for not regulating his judgment according to the movements of the adjutant-general's office. It had been his fortune to form an intimate acquaintance, in the early part of his career, with an officer considerably his senior, who, having given offence to the adjutant-general *of that period*, had eventually fallen a victim to the effects of his resentment. He was a married man and the father of a large family. It was the object of the official alluded to, to compel him to solicit his transfer to the non-effective establishment, and he succeeded in removing the obnoxious individual by a system of persecution unparalleled in the annals even of military despotism. Bearing the rank of

lieutenant-colonel, the victim was liable to be removed from one regiment to another *at discretion*,—a power exercised so mercilessly in his case, that he imposed on himself a voluntary separation from his family, establishing them comfortably at Madras, whilst he pursued his compulsive wanderings. As soon as time had been allowed to settle himself at one station, he was posted to a regiment cantoned at a very distant one, so that at length, worn out by the united influence of long marches, constant change of climate, and a harassed mind, he relieved the people in office of the task of tormenting farther an obnoxious individual, by finding a refuge from the pressure of distress in an asylum which even arbitrary power cannot reach,—*the grave*.

This circumstance made a powerful impression on the mind of *Lieutenant* Middleton, at the time of its occurrence, and its recollection was still so vivid in the mind of the *Colonel*, that it served, unconsciously to himself, perhaps, as a counteracting influence to the effects of habit and example. Consequently, although

not absolutely prejudiced in favour of Mr. Travers by the fact of his lying under the displeasure of his superiors, he was the more inclined to do him the justice of examining the real bearings of his case.

Captain Seymour, who cared, as he himself boasted, "neither for king nor kaisar," was very useful in assisting his researches. Without much difficulty they discovered by their united efforts,—first, that the ——th Cavalry, was under the command of one of the smallest of "the tritons amongst the minnows," who constitute the class called *martinets*;—secondly, that being gifted with one of the least minds ever appendant on an individual even of this notorious species, he was especially jealous of any influence in his regiment predominating over his own;—thirdly, that Mr. Travers enjoyed a popularity not only amongst the officers, but also amongst the men, in the highest degree offensive to the said most military commandant;—fourthly, that Mr. Travers, being the adjutant of his corps, had sundry opportunities of penetrating the exact depth and extent of

the professional and general knowledge of his military superior, and was compelled occasionally to advert to sundry mistakes, which convinced said superior that he was not, in the sight of his adjutant, precisely the magnificent bahadur he desired to appear before all men ;—fifthly, that the illustrious commandant had contrived so to harass his adjutant as to excite in him a desire of resigning his appointment, with all the distinctions and emoluments thereunto appertaining ;—sixthly, that the commandant had contrived to represent this desire, in a private dispatch to head quarters, as a personal affront to himself, which representation had drawn on his subordinate a severe reprimand, circulated by order to every regiment composing the force of which his formed a constituent part ;—seventhly, that Lieutenant Travers had forthwith taken the offensive step of declining all intercourse with his colonel which was not of a nature strictly official ;—eighthly, that the officers of the regiment generally had decidedly supported the lofty tone Mr. Travers had thought fit to assume, and had themselves

demonstrated a cold and dissatisfied feeling towards their commandant, highly detrimental to that good feeling and harmony so essential to the preservation of military discipline, and consequently injurious to the service ;—ninthly, that this state of things produced a *second* private representation to headquarters on the part of the commandant, which resulted in the fact of Mr. Travers being deprived of the appointment he was not permitted to resign, and being sent on his travels for the enlargement of his views touching the immeasurable distance that separates a subaltern from his commanding officer.

Now it happened, that not one of these nine points impressed on the mind of Colonel Middleton a belief, that there was anything essentially wrong in the conduct of the Honourable Lieutenant Henry Travers. He fancied there might possibly be a slight degree of imprudence, but of such a nature as bore evidence rather to the generous and independent character of the young man's mind, than to any base or dishonourable conduct such as he, in his secret thoughts, judged ought *alone* to be visited

by so severe a punishment. He had established it long since to his own entire satisfaction, that there could be nothing vitally objectionable in the principles or bearing of a man greatly beloved by his brother officers, as Mr. Travers undoubtedly was. Therefore, having no fear of either Commander-in-Chief or Adjutant-General before his eyes, he prepared to pursue precisely the same mode of treatment towards the young stranger, as if, instead of lying under the shade of official displeasure, he were basking in the noon-tide rays of the favour of all the functionaries of the Madras government. The circumstance of the whole affair which struck Colonel Middleton as being the least favourable to Mr. Travers's comfort at Kirkpore, was the unfortunate fact of his being to do duty with the regiment commanded *nominally* by Colonel Huggins, but in reality by his sovereign lady, the redoubtable Mrs. Huggins.

Farther acquaintance with Mr. Travers did not, by any means, tend to diminish the favourable impression made by his first appearance and manners. So much amiability was united with such loftiness of principle,—so much in-

formation with so little desire of display,—so many personal advantages with so little coxcombry,—that his visits were always acceptable even to Mrs. Middleton, who was usually pronounced fastidious in her taste. Florence naturally followed the lead of her mother, and was not long in making the additional discovery, that there was a certain inexplicable *something* about Mr. Travers which Captain Seymour wanted, the absence of which rendered the latter gentleman infinitely less agreeable than the former.

Mrs. Huggins, wearying sometimes of *toujours perdrix*, and requiring perhaps that the *bon bons* incessantly administered to her mental appetite, should have the advantage of varying, at least, in form and flavour, was exceedingly glad to hear of a new arrival in the shape of a young and very handsome man, allied moreover to half of the *Scotch*, if not the *British* nobility. It was only matter of surprise to her, that with his connexions and consequent interest, government, to whom those things were not, in general cases, indifferent,

should have thought of visiting him with their displeasure on account of any offence not of the most flagrant kind. Her dignified husband explained that *this* was *flagrans delictum*, inasmuch as the commanding officer with whom he had ventured to differ in opinion, was a very near relative of a certain influential personage, who was never offended with impunity. This note explanatory sufficiently revealed to Mrs. Huggins *why* the gentleman's offence had been visited with the *peine forte et dure*, but as she, to do her justice, held officials of all castes and descriptions, save her own particular Dickey, to be people not a whit less fallible than their neighbours, she conceived no dislike to the object of their persecution because he happened to enjoy that unfortunate distinction, and being otherwise prepossessed in his behalf, resolved on making herself agreeable to him according to the most approved principles of *her* school.

Mr. Travers had of course called on the colonel of the regiment with which he was appointed to do duty, as a matter of military

etiquette, but the reception he met with from that very dignified personage, was not such as tempted him to repeat his visits more frequently than that same etiquette absolutely required. Mrs. Huggins, however, was not a person who allowed a trifling obstacle to impede the prosecution of her designs. Indeed, symptoms of opposition to any serious purpose of her mind, had the invariable effect of confirming it. Even the evident coolness with which Mr. Travers met, or rather repelled, her advances, did not disgust her,—an effect probably to be traced to the principle before alluded to,—the fact of her being cloyed by the perpetual honey with which her “golden-lipped” flatterers supplied her. She liked contradiction, if it were only for the novelty of the thing. Moreover, she was indignant that her well-beloved husband had taken so decided a step as receiving the young man with marked coldness, without her concurrence. She abhorred, in her liege lord, that independence of will which, when evinced by herself, she regarded as a proof of the strength and superiority of her

mind. Then Mac Whalley had abused the new arrival as a coxcomb ;—Simms had sneered at him, as being *under a cloud* ;—Captain Summers had pitied the paleness of his complexion, with a complacent elevation of his own wonderfully florid physiognomy ;—Mrs. Harding had anathematised his abominable airs in having called on so few families, her's being one of the excluded ;—and Mrs. Roland had sighed, simpered, and said nothing. So that really Mrs. Huggins had invincible temptations to carry her benevolent designs, on Mr. Travers's behalf, into execution. She would be doing precisely the thing which the majority of her own peculiar friends and associates would wish her to leave undone. She would be giving her husband a practical reproof for the disposition to rebellion evinced in his presumptuous act of free-will ;—and moreover, she would please her own fancy in seeing at her table a face and figure which familiarity had not rendered insipid.

To make her pursuit of Mr. Travers more piquant, the more eagerly she advanced the

more he receded. He declined her invitations ; —rarely called on her ;—noticed her very little when they met accidentally at the house of a third person ; and altogether evinced symptoms of *distaste*, to call it by the gentlest name, which she would have been the most likely person in the world to resent, if her vanity had not warped her judgment, and enabled her to attribute that which was too evident to be denied, to the uncalled for coldness and hauteur with which Colonel Huggins had thought fit to mark his first reception of him. She had a high opinion of her own powers of pleasing when they were allowed a fair field for exertion, and she resolved to find, or to make, an opportunity of proving to Mr. Travers how agreeable she could be,—a design in which chance was at last more her friend than all the manœuvring she had brought to bear on this important object.

The Rajah of Kirkpore thought fit, at this juncture, as Rajahs occasionally do, to issue, by the medium of the Resident, cards of invitation to the principal part of the English

officers, both those employed at his own court, and those who formed part of the subsidiary Force, for a grand gala to be given at his summer palace; a pretty oriental building about two miles from the city in which he generally dwelt.

Of course acceptances were much more numerous than refusals. Mr. Travers, in his present state of mind, was not particularly anxious to witness a *spectacle* such as he had frequently seen before, and one which, he had reason to believe, he should very frequently have an opportunity of seeing again; however, actuated by some inscrutable motive, he thought fit, before he came to any final decision on the subject, to ascertain the intentions of Colonel Middleton and his family, and when he found that they had decided on accepting the Rajah's invitation, and when he listened to the eager expression of all Florence's anticipations of pleasure at being a guest at a royal eastern banquet, he thought it would be a very high treat to him to witness the extent of the gratification a young and unsophisticated

novice might derive from a thing of the kind.

The cantonment was, as has been said, a few miles distant from the Residency, and a very obliging note from Mr. and Mrs. Norman had accompanied the Rajah's invitation to Colonel Middleton and his family, inviting them to spend the few subsequent days at the Residency, as returning to the cantonment after the gala must be too fatiguing for a person so delicate as Miss Middleton, especially as a large dinner was to be given at the Residency on the day but one following, at which the Middletons were expected to be present. This invitation was, under the circumstances, too agreeable not to be accepted with satisfaction.

Captain Seymour never declined honouring a thing of this kind with his presence. It relieved the monotony of existence, and was sure to leave behind it sufficient food for sarcastic remark, to enliven the conversation of the next half dozen morning calls. He liked to criticise the dress and manner of the ladies ; to

sneer at the *bêtises* of the young men, and to excite the surprise of the natives. He never danced, but then he glided from fair to fair, scattering compliments, and bon-mots, as he passed from one to another, with a fertility that seemed inexhaustible. He derived also no inconsiderable satisfaction from the display of his own fine *person*, and the evident pleasure with which his attentions were received by the fairer portion of the community. But at this particular juncture, he had an additional motive to draw him to the Rajah's palace. The scene would be adorned by the presence of two young unmarried beauties, to whose unpractised eyes the whole exhibition would be, in the highest degree, novel. To gaze on the countenance of Florence, was to him delight at any season, and he could imagine nothing more exquisite than to observe the eloquence of its expression, under the influence of circumstances hitherto entirely beyond the range of her experience. And had he no thought of the beautiful Harriet Albany, who, sooth to say, began now to allow the thought of him to

occupy her too exclusively, considering the rule of conduct she had prescribed for herself? Yes, Captain Seymour *did* think of her; and he considered that if Florence *should* appear too well satisfied with the assiduities of Mr. Travers, whose arrival he considered as inopportune as it was unexpected, he would at least find consolation in the enjoyment of a most sentimental flirtation with the more brilliant, if not so attractive, Miss Albany.

CHAPTER IX.

It was as lovely a night as ever relieved the fervours of an Indian day, when all that were most distinguished, most brilliant, and most beautiful, of the society both of the Residency and cantonment of Kirkpore, were assembled in the gardens of the summer-palace of the Rajah. The moon shone brightly, but its light, delicious as it was, was overwhelmed by the glare of the thousand lamps that threw an artificial day over the gay crowd. The air was fragrant with the perfumes of orange-trees, limes, myrtles, jessamines,—rich, in short, with that peculiar and spicy aroma, with which the breezes of the east are laden. A band of English musicians was stationed amongst the trees, pouring forth loud strains of spirit-stirring and

martial music. The waters of the lake in the midst of the gardens sparkled beneath the reflection of the lights in earth and heaven, whilst little illuminated boats scudded over the surface, seeming, as they darted along, like shooting stars. They were freighted with groups of nâch-girls, who, during the progress of the evening, poured forth those dramatic strains in which the inhabitants of the east delight. Hindoo nobles, wandering about in their picturesque national costume,—wearing the richest shawls in drapery, or wreathed as turbans, or clad in gay and glittering scarfs of coloured muslin and gold,—added a truly oriental character to the whole spectacle, and reminded the crowds of Europeans that they were near an Asiatic prince, who at that moment was seated in his durbar*.

Everything breathed of regal state, except the port of the sovereign himself. Placed, by the prowess of British arms, on the musnud†

* An open hall or saloon in which the princes of India give audience.

† Throne.

from which his family had been expelled by civil dissensions, it seemed as if the young prince had lost, in the miserable and abject obscurity of his boyhood, all those qualities which the vulgar believe inherent in the blood royal. Elevated to a throne, he could not shake off the influence of education, and leaving the interests of his kingdom to the care of his ministers, he abandoned himself to the voluptuous indulgences of the zenanah, so that his mind had become "embodied and embruted, until it had quite lost the divine semblance of its first being." The costly pearls that were suspended from his neck,—the magnificent diamonds that flashed like a sun upon his brow,—did but increase the meanness of his whole person, by the contrast they forced upon the mind of the spectators. For him,—the lord of the feast,—it seemed as if all that was brightest and most beautiful around him, had no charms. He sat amongst his courtiers, with half closed eyes, gazing languidly upon the forms that flitted before him, apparently oppressed with the most cruel languor, and

shrinking beneath the weight of those dignities he was compelled to sustain. His reception of the more distinguished of the English ladies who were introduced to him, — those of the family of the Resident and of the commanding officer of the Force, — was in the highest degree ungracious and repulsive. He muttered a few inaudible words as they curtsied, which his vakeel interpreted into a compliment of most oriental hyperbole, and appeared to breathe freely only when they had retired from his presence.

Radiant in all the animation naturally inspired by a scene so novel, Harriet Albany glittered in the throng, as “some gay creature of the element.” Dressed with the most exquisite taste, — her complexion glowing with the excitement of the hour, — her eyes sparkling with the consciousness of deserving and attracting the most intense admiration, — even Seymour himself for a moment doubted, whether there were not, in her dazzling beauty, something that eclipsed all the soft loveliness of the gentle Florence. Captivated by the witchery

of her smile, he found himself near her, and was presently breathing into her ear all those *intangible* tendernesses which mean everything or nothing, as the speaker and the hearer choose to interpret them. In this case there was an unfortunate disagreement in the wishes of the two parties most interested. He who offered that adulation, laid it as incense upon an altar dedicated to the idol of the hour, whilst *she* received it as the serious expression of feelings at length strong enough to be irresistible. Alive to emotions as new as they were dangerous, Harriet, at that moment, forgot all the ambition of her character. An indefinite hope of living with and for Seymour possessed her now, for the first time, and imparted to her manner a softness so unusual, that the object of it felt its danger too strongly to trust himself longer within its sphere. He dreaded being betrayed into crossing the Rubicon, whence it would be impossible for him to retrace his steps.

Assuming a tone of sarcasm as unlike as possible to the vein of his previous conversation, he commenced his usual amusement of anato-

mising the manner and style of every person on whom his eye rested. Awakened by the change in him from her momentary dream, Harriet, with one sigh perhaps that thoughts so sweet were but a dream, adopted immediately the tone he thought fit to assume, and assisted him, with admirable tact, in showing up poor Mrs. Huggins, who was parading the gardens in a dress of flame-coloured gauze, and glittering with ornaments in every part of her person on which it was possible to place one.

“Here comes a spirit of evil,” said he, “clad in robes whose hue too plainly bespeaks the fiery atmosphere of the place it has quitted.”

“Or a spirit of light borne earthwards on a rainbow, that has caught the hue of the vehicle by which it passed,” said the lady.

“I yield to you! A flight like that is quite beyond my poor imagination. I leave Mrs. Huggins in your charitable hands, and she may be thankful to the benevolence of the seraph-face I see yonder, that has inspired me with such tender mercy.”

Harriet's eye followed the glance of his, and

rested, at length, on the radiant face of the angel Florence. Supported by her father's arm, but listening with the most undeviating attention to the conversation of Travers, who was on her left hand, her sweet eyes were lighted up by an animation wholly *spirituel*, and Harriet, even Harriet, with all her vanity, could not but be conscious, that there was a charm in her innocent rival, which, whilst she perceived its full force, was unintelligible to herself.

"Florence is happy in enjoying the protection of a father," she said, endeavouring to conceal her embarrassment under an air of sentiment.

"And *such* a father!" said Seymour, with much more *empressement* than he permitted himself to evince on any but the most extraordinary occasions.—"What a security for the excellence of a wife, is derived from parents like Miss Middleton's!"

"A wife!" said Harriet, attempting to smile, "I really had no idea that matters had taken so serious a turn with you."

“ I confess that I was thinking merely of the general rule,” said Seymour with an air of abstraction. “ Pray, do you know much of Mr. Travers, the new arrival, and who, in addition to that advantage, enjoys the supreme felicity of claiming your interest as an object of government persecution ? ”

Harriet had quite penetration enough to trace the links of the chain of associations which, in the mind of her companion, had connected the idea of Florence’s marriage with that of Mr. Travers. She stifled a sentiment of uneasiness by the amiable desire of rendering Seymour miserable.

“ Know Mr. Travers ! ” she exclaimed, with an air of delight that very much exaggerated her real sentiments. “ ‘ Not to know him argues one’s self unknown ! ’ At present he is the hero, *par excellence*, of Kirkpore, and beyond all others, the Middleton family seem especially fascinated by him. Indeed, ‘ not to speak it profanely,’ I think it would be difficult to discover whether Mrs. Middleton, or her fair daughter, is his more devoted admirer.”

“For myself,” said Captain Seymour, unable entirely to repress his pique, “I confess I have the bad taste to see nothing very extraordinary, or extraordinarily superb, in this hero *par excellence*, as you call him. I cannot bring my mind to understand why a person, lying under the ban of his immediate superiors, should thence derive a claim to the additional favour of all those with whom he is brought in contact.”

“But one has such a natural sympathy in favour of all objects of unjust persecution!” said Harriet, maliciously. “And then do but reflect on—or if that be too much trouble, *look at*—Mr. Travers’s dark grey eyes, so full of the expression poetical and sublime. Then his hair—you must know, even *I*, fastidious as my enemies pronounce me, have nothing to say against that fine dark brown hair. Then his complexion, you must allow, has precisely the poetical hue,—pale but not sickly,—just elegant,—no more. Then his smile! Yes, I must confess, his smile is as nearly irresistible as anything *I* can imagine, who am not, as you

may conjecture, composed of the most inflammable materials possible."

"Indeed Mr. Travers *is* an enviable man!" said Seymour, with an expression of tenderness which Harriet *felt* became him too well; and a consciousness that her deepening colour and downcast eye indicated an emotion she was too worldly, if not too delicate, to be desirous of betraying, rendered her more captivating than the most brilliant of her smiles had ever done.

"How very well Miss Middleton looks this evening!" she said, endeavouring to escape from her embarrassment.

"Most exquisitely!" assented the ever ready Seymour. "When I saw her before the musnud of yonder eastern despot, I could not but think of Esther, that fairest Jewish maiden, soliciting a boon from Ahasuerus."

"And you, I presume, envied the monarch of old the power of extending the golden sceptre."

"In truth I did,—but well is it for me that thrones and crowns are not mine to give.—I

never could resist the petition of a pair of fine eyes, even at the expense of transferring half a world."

"So, Seymour, you are entertaining my pretty niece, I perceive," said the voice of the Resident, who had been conversing, during the last half hour, with the prime minister of the Rajah.

"I am using my best endeavours," said Seymour, with that air of gallantry which became him so well.

"And man can do no more," said the deliberate Mr. Norman, giving an emphasis to each monosyllable. "But take a friendly hint, Seymour. You must not make love to my little girl,—must he, Harriet? There is a prior claim in the way, my good fellow."

"Indeed I did not venture to aspire so high," said Seymour, with perfect *retenue*.

And Harriet looked for an instant at his composed countenance, and for a brief interval her heart trembled with that pang of agony which attends the sudden crushing of some cherished hope, — *how* cherished, discovered,

perhaps, only at the instant it suffers utter blight. In bitterness, Harriet Albany became a convert to the faith of love, and the proud coquette was awakened to the conviction, that the only heart she coveted, defied her.

With instinctive presence of mind, she turned to the Resident a face beaming with its accustomed smile, and playfully chid him for the partiality which could possibly believe, there existed the slightest necessity for so very strange a warning.

"Much mischief may be prevented by a word in time, child," said he with his habitual impracticability. "I have no desire to see Tomkins and Seymour at ten paces' distance."

"I can but envy Mr. Tomkins his good fortune," said Captain Seymour, with a smile so very bland as to prove there was no envy in the case. "A golden key opens gates which defy all other assailants."

Mr. Norman did not exactly understand the force of this sarcasm, but Harriet felt it keenly.

"It does not necessarily follow, that because

a man *has* gold, he has therefore no other merit," said she, inconsiderately.

"Far be it from me to uphold so fatal a heresy," replied Captain Seymour, still smiling. "I have the greatest respect for Mr. Tomkins; he is one of the most respectable men of my acquaintance, and the last with whom I could venture to compare myself, for I fear we have no qualities in common.—Least of all," he added, with a bow, "should I venture to criticise so excellent a person to Miss Albany."

Harriet bit her lip, and asked herself whether she did not actually hate the speaker.—She was discomposed enough to be grateful for the relief afforded by her aunt's joining them.

"Mr. Norman, Mr. Norman," said the shrill voice of the Resident's lady, "I desire you will introduce Mr. Travers to me immediately. It is very singular, that everybody should be acquainted with the most agreeable man in the room, except myself, who am the first person present."

"I was not aware that Mr. Travers en-

joyed that enviable pre-eminence," said Mr. Norman, with great dignity. "The society of this place, Captain Seymour and myself amongst others, are greatly obliged to you."

"Pray omit me; — I decline entering the lists with so formidable a competitor," said Seymour, with an air of superiority not to be mistaken.

"I am of Mrs. Norman's party," said Harriet, resuming her vivacity. "Of Mr. Travers's powers of pleasing I am no judge, but fortunately it does not require an introduction to decide on his personal pretensions. Really it is quite refreshing to meet with a man in India, who carries with him so completely the air of a man of fashion and refinement."

Now if Captain Seymour valued himself on anything in the world, it was precisely on the possession of that air *distingué* which Miss Albany had pronounced to be the characteristic of Mr. Travers. This peculiarity had not, by any means, escaped a penetration sharpened by worldly collision, and Harriet

enjoyed the revenge that had so keenly wounded his self-love.

“Mr. Norman, will you introduce Mr. Travers or not?” said his lady, in her shrill treble voice;—“if you will not, I will ask somebody else. I will get acquainted with him,—on that point I am decided.”

“I have not the honour of knowing the gentleman,” said Mr. Norman. “I am not in the habit of patronising disaffection and insubordination and that sort of thing in the military, or indeed in any class of persons whatever.”

“Stuff!” exclaimed the lady, walking away;—“really the absurdities of elderly people are too provoking!”

And for once in her life, Harriet Albany followed in the wake of her uncle’s wife, and left that gentleman to condole with Captain Seymour on the miseries of being deserted.

“Are you coming, child?” said Mrs. Norman, seeing her husband’s niece at her elbow, with no very amiable sentiment. “I don’t see why you should be desirous of knowing Mr. Travers.

You have plenty of flirts elsewhere, and really, I must say, I think you indulge in that game too much. It is a kind of conduct very much censured in this country."

"Permitted, I presume, to married ladies only," replied Harriet, with a glance at a certain Captain Cornish, who at that moment approached, and for whom Mrs. Norman's partiality was quite notorious. It was a glance that deepened Mrs. Norman's complexion—albeit unused to the blushing mood—to the very temples.

"Captain Cornish," said the lady recovering from the effect of the sarcasm, "are you acquainted with Mr. Travers?—We are dying to know him; and the Resident, as usual, is so stupidly bent on thwarting us, that I am resolved on having my own way by some means or other."

"I should be happy to assist you," said Captain Cornish, the most obliging of officers, "but really the unhappy youth is in the fangs of Mrs. Huggins, and I have not courage to rush to his rescue."

At this moment a gush of music was heard in the direction of the tank, which attracted even the Bæotian ears of Mrs. Norman. The nâch-girls had commenced one of their passionate dramas, and the whole gay crowd was hurrying to the borders of the lake to listen to those strange, and, to many, most fascinating sounds. The figures of the singers, in their gay and glittering drapery, were distinctly visible in the light of the numerous lamps, but in their present situation,—seated in small boats,—it was impossible that the accompaniment of dance could be added to their song, and to many of the male part of the spectators, that was by much the most attractive portion of the exhibition.

To give an idea of the dance of the nâch girls by description, would be difficult, if not impossible. The motion is so soft and gliding as to be scarcely perceptible, and is as remote as can well be imagined from even the most languid measures of the *danseuses* of Europe. The feet of the performers are bare,—their ancles adorned with bracelets valuable ac-

according to the celebrity and consequent means of the wearer. A constant gesture of the hands accompanies the motion of the feet, and so great a pliability of the former member is acquired by habit, that the wrist is frequently bent in the course of the performance, until the back of the hand becomes parallel with the arm. The creeping motion of the body is varied by frequent starts, as the action of the poem recited becomes more vehement, and by a rotary motion, in which the glittering drapery assumes a fan-like, horizontal position, which is maintained, by dint of practice, as long as these rapid evolutions are continued. Considering the place which women occupy in the scale of the society of eastern nations, it may hardly be necessary to add, that the subject matter of the dramatic monologue, is the quarrel of the favourite sultana of the zenanah with her lord, in which her anger, jealousy, despair, are first pourtrayed, and subsequently the most seductive blandishments, to allure the passion which, she fears, is weakened. On this the grand efforts of the singer are bestowed, and perhaps

alternate jealousy and love are hardly ever better portrayed than by the dark flashing eyes, and unrestrained passion, of an Indian nâch girl.

Very few English admire this exhibition on the first representation, but by repetition it ceases to disgust, and at length, in many cases, comes to form the chief enjoyment of life. It is a fact, however, that whenever this fatal taste is acquired, the moral being of the man becomes more and more enervated, until its healthier European characteristics are lost in the voluptuous indolence that enthrals the generality of the wealthy Asiatics*.

* “Dancing girls are the luxury of large towns.—Female children and grown-up young women are bought by all ranks. Among the Rajpoot chiefs, these slaves are very numerous, as also in the houses of the principal Brahmins.—There are a variety of ways in which slaves are procured in Central India. Numbers date their condition from a famine or scarcity, when men sold their children to those who were able to support them.—The farther demand is supplied by the Brinjarries or grain-carriers, who import females into and from Guzerat and other countries, whom they usually pretend to have bought, and by the Gwarriahs, who are open and professed stealers of female children.—Female slaves, in almost every instance, are sold to prostitu-

Mrs. Huggins found as much delight in this exhibition, as the most accomplished lady-musician derives from the performance of Malibran

tion. Some, it is true, rise to be favourite mistresses of their masters, and enjoy both power and luxury, whilst others are raised by the success of their sons;—these are exceptions. The dancing women are all slaves, condemned to a life of toil for the profit of others; and some of the Rajpoot chiefs or Zemindars, who have from fifty to two hundred female slaves in their family, after employing them in the menial labours of their house during the day, send them at night to their own dwellings, where they are at liberty to form such connexions as they please, but a large part of the profits of that promiscuous intercourse into which they fall, is annually exacted by their master, who adds any children they happen to produce to his list of slaves. The female slaves in this condition, as well as those of the dancing sets, are not permitted to marry, and are often very harshly used. The latter, from this cause and the connexions they form, are constantly in the habit of running away.—The native governments take no cognizance of the punishments inflicted on slaves, except such as extend to life. Sometimes they are cruelly treated, but not generally. This traffic in slaves must now decrease, as it can no longer be carried on with impunity. A few years ago, no one dared leave his own district to inquire after his wife or daughter; the whole country can now be traversed in safety. This change, and the discoveries of guilt that have recently been made, will hasten the end of this abominable usage.”—SIR JOHN MALCOLM.

or Pasta. It was entirely in accordance with all her ideas of the harmonious and the graceful, and she was proportionably loud in expressing the extent of her gratification.

By a perseverance of which few of her sex are capable, and with a defiance of all repulse that told well for the extent of her courage, Mrs. Huggins had succeeded in seizing on the disengaged arm of Mr. Travers,—a capture which he bore with an impatience equalled only by his desire of enjoying the expression of the feelings excited in Miss Middleton by this unaccustomed spectacle.

Mrs. Huggins, however, was one of those persons who, having resolved to carry a point, do so, notwithstanding all possible obstacles. She appealed to Mr. Travers's compassion,—exclaimed on the rudeness of the colonel, who had left her to fight her way through the crowd alone,—as if Mrs. Huggins had not been Amazon enough to contend with the whole population of a province,—eulogised Miss Middleton's good looks, and finally, succeeded in attaching herself to their party.

Now this was a state of things the most disagreeable to *them* that could be imagined. Mrs. Huggins was a person of so much notoriety, that the attention of a great proportion of the assemblage was directed to her. People were tolerably certain of deriving some amusement from her. She violated every ordinary rule of etiquette according to the caprice of the moment, and she delighted in talking so loud as to be audible to every body within the enclosure. Imagine the delicate and retiring Florence forced into close association with such a person !—The scene immediately lost all attractions for her ; she felt herself singled out as the object of unpleasant remark, and she whispered a request to Mr. Travers to conduct her to her mother as soon as he could contrive to do so. He was not long in making an opportunity, and wondered how it was possible he could derive so much satisfaction from relinquishing the temporary protection of the being dearer to him than any other in the world.

Mrs. Huggins was delighted to find herself

actually tête-à-tête—if such an expression can describe the association of two people in the midst of a crowd—with the most admired young man of the cantonment. She had also the additional satisfaction of proving her independence of her husband, by singling out, as an object of particular attention, an individual obnoxious to *him*, as lying under the shadow of official displeasure. Such a combination of circumstances exhilarated the always exuberant spirits of Mrs. Huggins, even beyond their usual pitch, and rendered her voice somewhat louder than before.

“Did you ever hear a finer nâch, Mr. Travers?” she began,—and here it may be necessary to remark, that we by no means do justice to the rapidity of the lady’s ideas, by translating her language into the idiom usually spoken in England. Like most people born and educated in India, to whom Hindostanee, or the Malabar dialect, is the vernacular tongue, she possessed a peculiar art of abbreviation, by dropping the article *always*, and occasionally words that occupy a much more conspicuous

situation in a sentence. For instance, her address to her companion on the present occasion ran verbatim thus:—"ever hear finer nâch, Mr. Travers?—Girl, this side in first boat very pretty. Sweet eyes. Admire fine eyes? Black eyes in this country very common. Agree for once with Captain Seymour;—likes blue better."

"So much depends on taste," said Mr. Travers, with as much complacency as he could assume, his penetration being quite equal to detect the real object of the lady's remark, who had the character of discovering every thing that *was* passing in the cantonment, and sometimes a great deal that was *not*.

"Ah, well,—you are right,—young men should keep their own secrets," said Mrs. Huggins, with a voice which proved that *she* at least was guilty of keeping none. "I assure you, however, you are not singular. A great many people prefer Miss Middleton to Miss Albany;—I do for one. I never saw a more disagreeable young woman than Miss Albany."

“ I fear she is within hearing,” said Travers, who wished his companion in the tank.

“ No matter,—I am never ashamed of my opinion,” returned Mrs. Huggins with a laugh. “ I care for nobody, as all the world will tell you. Why should I?—You don’t, not for the Commander-in-Chief, you know; if you did, you would not be here,”—and a triumphant laugh proclaimed Mrs. Huggins’s satisfaction with this home-thrust, as she would have called it.

Mr. Travers was exactly in that position in which Mrs. Huggins delighted to place the objects of her gentle raillery,—at fault. He could only bow in silence, but his countenance was not entirely free from an expression of displeasure.

“ For my part, I like independence,” resumed Mrs. Huggins, encouragingly; “ it is my rule to say what I choose, and do as I please. I dare say you think it strange at present, but we shall understand each other in time, I foresee. I wish you had called oftener since you have

been at Kirkpore. However, never too late to mend, you know. Come and dine to-morrow at three—exactly,—I wait for nobody.”

“I regret I cannot have the honour,—I am engaged,” returned Travers, too happy to meet the lady’s invitation with an apology which had the advantage of being true.

“Engaged!—where are you going?” said Mrs. Huggins, with that unparalleled frankness which was restrained by none of the ordinary rules of society.

“To Colonel Middleton’s,” replied Mr. Travers, coldly, preferring to satisfy the impertinence which disgusted him, rather than to hazard another attack.

“Old Middleton’s!—really you almost live there,” said Mrs. Huggins, much displeased. “Well, if not to-morrow, the day after,—I will take no refusal.”

“I am sorry,—it really will not be in my power;—it is a public day at the mess, and I have invited two or three friends to go with me.”

“Nonsense! put them off,” said Mrs. Hug-

gins, with the imperious air of a person unaccustomed to have her sovereign will and pleasure disputed.

Mr. Travers stared at her with a look of unfeigned astonishment.

“Don’t you understand me?” She repeated, “Put off your friends, and dine with me; only two or three subs., I suppose, who won’t mind it, and if they do, say you act by my orders. I command the regiment, you know.”

“Pardon me, I really was *not* aware,” said Travers, too weary of his companion to endure another impertinence. “I cannot break my engagement.”

“Just as you please, I never press anybody,” returned Mrs. Huggins, withdrawing her arm from his, and to his inexpressible relief, walking away.

From that moment Mrs. Huggins became the implacable enemy of Mr. Travers. By retreating from her amicable advances, he had committed an offence, in her opinion, inexpiable. He had exposed her to the mortification of being publicly foiled, for she had boasted of

her resolution of attaching him to her party, and she was too shrewd to be ignorant that, however she might place her failure to the account of her own dislike of him on acquaintance, her dear friends would understand, and rejoice, in the real state of the case. Mortification in her was never a passive feeling, and she had hardly received the offence, before she had ascertained, to her own entire satisfaction, how easy it would be to avenge it.

As to Mr. Travers, unconscious of the extent of the injury he had done himself, he was sensible only of the relief of being freed from Mrs. Huggins's most wearisome society. He was so delighted with his escape, and with finding himself again at the side of Florence, that he felt less uneasiness than usual in seeing her supported by Captain Seymour, who was precisely the kind of man of whom the most confiding lover might reasonably be jealous.

And Travers *was* a most confiding lover. If attracted first by the bewitching loveliness,—the sweet and graceful manners—of Florence,

his preference had ripened into a warmer sentiment under the sanction of his judgment. He had had sufficient experience of the sex, to be proof against charms that were merely personal. A great proportion of Englishwomen in India, are educated with a view to their ultimate establishment in the East; showy accomplishments, consequently, are much more general than cultivated minds, and beauty and intellect co-exist rarely in the same individual. Travers had had every advantage of education, and he had done much for himself. Gifted by nature with a strong and masculine mind, he had attained such a mastery over himself, as left his passions very much under his own control. To the ordeal of female allurements he had been more than once exposed, and he had escaped unscathed, but with a resolution not to hazard his happiness by marrying in India. That resolution had not been lightly shaken. In Mrs. Middleton he saw such a mother as a thinking man would desire his own children to possess. Colonel Middleton was one of whose alliance the most fastidious

might be proud,—whose life had been marked by all that could confer most honour, both on the officer and the gentleman. The most dangerous part of the career of an unmarried female leaving her native shore for the east, had been past by Florence under the happiest auspices: she had had the advantage of the protection of both her parents on the voyage, so that she had been as carefully preserved from the contamination of objectionable association, as if she had never been from the shelter of the paternal roof. And then Florence herself—who that looked into the depths of that holy eye, but must read the purity, the elevation of soul, that was enshrined there? In short, Mr. Travers was convinced, and he had much more solid grounds for his conviction than lovers generally possess,—that his devoted attachment to the daughter of Colonel Middleton was a tribute paid to her as much by his judgment as his heart.

The evident admiration of Captain Seymour had sometimes caused him uneasiness. He

felt, that if he had once been accepted by Florence, jealousy could have no existence in his mind ; he would be secure in his reliance on her principles. But, agitated by all a lover's natural doubts, he had not yet ventured to speak plainly of his passion to its object. He was not quite sure that there existed in her that preference he was so desirous of inspiring. Occasionally, it is true, there were symptoms of pleasure in his society,—a lighting up of the countenance when he approached, that threw sunshine over his whole being ; but the shadow returned, when a smile answered the greeting of Seymour, who was so frequent a visitor at her father's. To be sure, Seymour was not a marrying man, but who would wish to be accepted by the woman he loves, merely because the man she would really have chosen, is unattainable ? Travers felt sometimes, that he would have relinquished his best hopes on earth, unconnected with Florence, to know that Seymour had offered himself to her, and had been refused. This, it must be confessed, was

not a very magnanimous sentiment, but it may be pardoned amongst the multitude of a lover's errors.

Having, however, just escaped from the merciless grasp of Mrs. Huggins, every thing was *couleur de rose*. He was contented that Florence should occasionally answer the remarks addressed to her by Captain Seymour, and that she should smile, if Seymour—always amusing—said something more than usually brilliant. He was perfectly satisfied, that in those little collisions of opinion which must always occur in discussions on matters of taste, such as were naturally suggested by the scene before them, Florence should invariably support himself. This was not very unreasonable, and less might have satisfied a lover bent on *hoping*.

Supper was announced, and the party proceeded to the hall redolent with the vapours of the oil that burnt in the lamps, — a most unpleasant accompaniment at the entertainments of a native prince. The room was long but low ; there was no punkah—the lights, the company, and the attendants, were all nume-

rous, so that the heat was nearly intolerable, and many guests paid for the honour of being at a royal entertainment, by suffering temporary martyrdom. The supper tables were covered in the style of Europeans in India, but with a larger proportion of pilaus, kibabs and curries, than is usual. A Hindoo prince could not of course partake of it. The Rajah sat at the upper end of the apartment, surrounded by his court, spectator of a scene in which he appeared to take greater interest than in any of the previous festivities. Doubtless, it must be a curious spectacle to see so many *feringhees* * eating with knives and forks, when they were provided with the usual complement of hands. The Asiatic prince and his court appeared to feel and enjoy all the novelty and the ridicule of the spectacle.

Supper ended, a nâch succeeded,—then a display of fire-works, for which India is so celebrated, and which Florence thought infinitely below her expectations,—and the gala terminated.

* Europeans.

CHAPTER X.

JUST before sunrise on the following morning, an elephant belonging to the Resident, was led into the compound* of the Residency. A howdah, in form resembling an English gig, was placed on the back of the magnificent animal, who, when his trappings were properly adjusted, knelt down to receive Miss Albany and her friend Florence. The Mahout† bestrode the neck of the stately beast, having a hooked goad in his hand, and with paces that covered yards between each footstep, he strode forth into the broad and well-kept road.

The cool freshness of the morning air,—exhilarating everywhere,—is nowhere more keenly enjoyed than in India. The bland breeze in-

* Garden, or pleasure-grounds.

† Guide or attendant of the elephant.

fuses strength of body and energy of mind to counterpoise the enervating effects of the scorching sun of midday, and if the native of more northern climes would preserve health,—nay, life itself,—it is absolutely necessary that he should benefit by this best medicine which Nature affords.

The cheek of Harriet Albany was paler than usual ;—her eye was thoughtful, and her brow contracted. Her companion, on the contrary, presented a countenance cheerful as the young morning itself, and an eye beaming with the light of the sky, whose colour it reflected. Harriet looked at her, and sighed bitterly.

“This climate has no effect on your beauty, Florence,” she began. “The fortunate circumstances which surround you, embellish even your person. You are the impersonation of happiness.”

“Why should I not be happy?—Is it possible I can be otherwise?” said Florence, with a smile that spoke all of felicity. “In the enjoyment of perfect health,—surrounded by friends,—possessing all the leisure which in-

tellect requires, and abundant means of cultivating it,—books, music,—a father I revere,—a mother I adore,—how can I but be the happiest of human beings ?”

“And a crowd of lovers at your feet,—an additional charm of existence, which you were too modest to appropriate, I presume,” said Harriet, with a cheek paler than before.

“Men are idle in India, and it is an occupation to make love. To be the object of such attentions,—a refuge from ennui, is not a thing to value one’s self upon.”

“If one were only that, surely not,” said Harriet ; and she spoke in a sadder tone than usual. “But you must know, and feel, that you have inspired more—much more—than a mere idle preference.”

Florence blushed deeply, as she felt the searching eye of her companion upon her ; for her thought was with Travers.

“That damask rose tells tales enough,—I will not torment you more ;” said Harriet, attempting a smile. “And yet, Florence,—sweetest—happiest—girl,—if you would but—could

but—answer one question,—and yet why needs it?—Could it tell me more than I already know?”—— She paused, and with an effort, aiming at raillery,—“So, Seymour is the happy man, after all?” she resumed. “Give me credit for my prediction.”

“Captain Seymour!—What can you mean, my dear Harriet?—I am bewildered.”

“It is not like your usual candour to affect such a tone, Florence,” said Miss Albany, reproachfully. “Far be it from me to attempt to penetrate any thing you wish to conceal;—only from our hereditary friendship,—the friendship of our mothers,—I thought, I fancied, you would not object to speak to me frankly of a circumstance so important to you, and one, moreover, which must shortly be divulged to the whole cantonment.”

“If I had anything certain to tell,” said Florence, blushing more painfully than before, “but delicacy,—propriety,—must surely keep me silent on a matter which, after all, may but be the conjecture of—of vanity.”

“Then Seymour has not yet proposed?”—

said Harriet, with an animation that was so closely allied to hope, as to indicate more selfishness than, in a guarded moment, she would have chosen to exhibit, admitting that her suspicions were correct.

“Captain Seymour!” said Florence, with mingled surprise and earnestness. “How can you suspect me of entertaining so vain a thought?—He is the last man on earth whom I should judge likely to commit himself by marrying,—the last man, with all his agreeableness and good-nature,—whom *I* should choose to marry.”

Harriet did not reply. She struggled with her emotion for a few seconds: but the reaction of her feelings was too violent to be restrained by one so little used to self-command, and, covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears.

Florence, equally surprised and alarmed, could but look with pity on an exhibition of passionate feelings, of the cause of which she had not the remotest conception. From all she had seen of the character of Miss Albany,—

from all Harriet's declarations of her own modes of thinking, and views of life,—she was the last person to be suspected of indulging a violent attachment for any man,—least of all, an unsolicited attachment.

Miss Albany afforded another illustration of the necessity of that sacred injunction,—“Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” Self-relying, confident in her own reasonable method of appreciating the things of life at their real value,—ambitious on principle,—covetous of wealth, not by temperament, but from a conviction of its necessity in procuring all those luxuries and appendages to consideration, which, in the estimation of the worldly, are absolutely indispensable to respectability,—she allowed herself to receive the assiduous attentions of a most accomplished man, who knew more of the world than she did, and consequently foiled her at her own weapons. Captain Seymour was not long in developing a character which, in so many points, resembled his own;—in the selfishness, which considered self-indulgence the great end

of existence;—in the coquetry, which exulted in inspiring attachments it never meant to reciprocate. His letter to his friend reveals the real nature of his feelings for the worldly Harriet, and the pure, single-minded, and intellectual Florence. Perfectly aware of the sentiments with which the former regarded him, he had no compassion for the tenderness that had been only *almost* solicited, and was yielded against every principle that had, hitherto, been acknowledged as a rule of action by its unfortunate subject. Captain Seymour, by his own confession, would not have married an angel, unless she had brought a golden dowry, and, probably, hardly that would have tempted him to an union with a woman whose resemblance to himself had the miserable effect of rendering him distrustful of her. The snares of each had been spread, but one only had been rendered captive, and that was unfortunately the weaker antagonist,—the one to whom,—from the habits of society,—the imperious prescriptions of her sex,—defeat was attended by

mortification, and by anguish, which were only not despair.

“Abhor me—despise me, as you please,” said Harriet at length, slowly recovering;—“your contempt for me cannot equal my own. One would not be outdone in everything, you know,” she added with bitterness.

Florence could offer only general soothings and consolations, but she was not permitted to remain long ignorant of the source of her friend’s distress.

“So Seymour really has not proposed,” said Harriet, reviving, as she admitted a conviction so essential to her peace. “How you and I have been playing at cross purposes!—But after all—why should I be so forward as to admit a hope that has no stabler foundation than man’s caprice?—Seymour admires you, Florence;—you cannot be so young, or so blind, as to be ignorant of that fact.”

“*Esteems* me, perhaps,” returned Florence, —“not quite so highly, but with the same kind of sentiment as he regards my mother.”

“ Ah, if it were so !—If one could but be certain !—Tell me, Florence, what Seymour has ever said to you of me ? ”

“ He has always had the politeness to speak of you in such a manner as he knew would be acceptable to us, your best—your oldest friends in this country. Do you suppose any person would venture to censure you to us ? ”

“ No, my kind child ;—but that is not precisely what I meant you to understand.—Are you quite sure, Florence, that your heart has escaped the fascinations of a man whom all the world besides pronounce irresistible ? ”

“ Quite sure,” said Florence, with the firmness of truth, and of *prepossession*.

“ Tell me then, dear girl,—do you imagine—can you divine—No, no—it is impossible !—I cannot ask the humiliating question even of you.”

A light broke suddenly upon the mind of Florence. Inexperienced as she was,—convinced also of the ambitious views of her companion,—she could no longer be blind to the fact of Harriet’s unsolicited preference of Sey-

mour, and how much soever an unwooed attachment was repugnant to all her own ideas of the propriety and fitness of things,—she could not withhold her compassion from a woman who, in addition to the misery consequent on the uncertainty of her preference being returned, had to sustain the shock of proving how unstable was the foundation on which all her fondly cherished principles had rested.

“Captain Seymour,” said Florence, with a regard to truth that was never violated, and was even more scrupulously observed on a point on which she believed the peace of her friend to be at issue, “has given me no reason to believe him capable of such an attachment to any woman as would tempt him to marry. On the contrary, he has always insisted, both to my father and myself, on the impossibility of his forming any connexion of the kind, unless accident threw in his way a woman whose fortune equalled the extent of personal attraction *he* should require,—a thing hardly to be expected in India.”

“Mercenary coxcomb !” said Harriet, with a

shudder. "Love, however, has wrought greater miracles than the overthrow of opinions such as his. My great fear of his regarding with preference a visible and tangible object being removed, I can contemplate the future, if with doubt, still without despair."

The two became profoundly silent under the operation of very different states of feeling. In addition to the astonishment felt by Florence at discovering that Miss Albany was really cherishing an attachment, for which she was ready and willing to sacrifice all the ambitious views to realize which she had avowedly sailed to India, she could not comprehend the species of encouragement with which her friend evidently received the marked and intelligible attentions of Mr. Tomkins. It was new to her, that a practised coquette, having a particular object in view, was little scrupulous whose feelings she sacrificed in attaining it.

Harriet, meanwhile, was absorbed in a reverie in which hope and fear by turns predominated. Believing firmly that her unconscious companion was too little vain to ascertain the exact extent

of the admiration she excited in the other sex, Miss Albany was yet convinced, that Captain Seymour had been, at least, *in danger* of regarding her with sentiments of such exclusive devotion as must have destroyed *her* hopes for ever. How he had contrived to escape just short of an entanglement she could not conceive, and she attributed it rather to the inexperience of her companion than to her perfect integrity. Conscious of her own exceeding personal attractions, vain of her knowledge of mankind, and confident in her power of managing them, she hoped, were the field once clear, she should win the heart she coveted. She had learnt enough this morning to be convinced, that Florence had an attachment which would probably be revealed shortly, and she calculated on the wound the vanity of Seymour would receive, when that revelation was made, as offering an opportunity to *catch his heart in the rebound*.

The morning airing of the two terminated, therefore, more peaceably than its commencement promised. As they approached the Residency, Harriet said, in a subdued tone,

“ I need not ask you not to betray the weakness you have witnessed. Your own delicacy is my safe-guard ; let me entreat you not even to render your mother a party to my secret. It can be attended with no possible good, and will lower me both in her eyes and my own.”

“ Trust me,” said Florence earnestly ; “ it is an accidental confidence, which mamma would not even desire to share.”

And Harriet *did* confide implicitly in an assurance, which the integrity she respected without imitating, guaranteed.

A large party assembled at the Residency this evening. It was one of those magnificent entertainments in which Mr. Norman laid aside the parsimonious spirit that generally regulated his proceedings. Every thing was conducted on a scale of splendour, that might have been envied by the most ostentatious Plenipo. that ever represented his sovereign at the proudest European court. The most profuse lights, the choicest viands, the costliest wines, did honour to the station occupied by the host, and was in character with the enormous salary

given by his government. The company was more numerous than any that had before surrounded the table of the present Resident of Kirkpore, and many of the older denizens of the place began to whisper among themselves a hope, that the ancient glories of the Residency, celebrated even in the hospitable east for the munificence that had once presided within its walls, would be revived.

Harriet, although her eyes were averted, with that consciousness which somebody has called *the sixth sense of love*, was aware of the *entrée* of Captain Seymour, knew that he had paid the customary compliments to Mrs. Norman, and was standing, in apparently earnest conversation, with the Resident. The heart of Miss Albany throbbed painfully, and no exertion of self-command enabled her to tranquillize the tumult. She hoped, feared, desired, and dreaded his approach. Mr. Tomkins, who had hitherto been rewarded for his efforts at conversation,—and to him every attempt of the kind *was* an effort,—with an occasional smile, watched in vain for that light

which was the sunshine that warmed his honest love into growth and vigour. He could not catch the sparkle of the eye now downcast and hidden beneath its drooping lid. He saw the colour of the cheek deepen and fade alternately, and he whispered a fear that the object of his tenderness was ill,—a conjecture repulsed with a peevish expression of impatience. Poor Mr. Tomkins could but wonder, and add it to his already large list of the inexplicable mysteries that constitute the idiosyncrasy of each particular woman.

Captain Seymour, however, made no attempt to divide the attention of the lady with the enviable Mr. John Tomkins. A bow, the courtesy and polished elegance of which might have excited the admiration of George the Fourth, expressed his sense of her presence. He stood for a few minutes before each lady of his acquaintance, addressing her with the happy confidence of a man certain of being listened to with approbation, and receiving the reward of his attention in the smile with which one fair face after another was lifted up to

his. At length, having noticed every person in the room by a greeting, varying in warmth from the distant bow to the friendly shake of the hands,—from the cold “how are you?” to the emphatic inquiry after the health of a whole household,—he placed himself behind the sofa on which Florence was seated between her mother and Mr. Travers, and commenced a conversation with the Middleton party, the interest and animation of which might be gathered from the countenances of the speakers generally. Even Mr. Travers looked more cordially on Captain Seymour than usual, but *that* might be the effect of half an hour’s conversation he had contrived to have with Florence in the course of the morning, during her mother’s accidental absence from the boudoir appropriated to their use at the Residency.

The perturbation of Miss Albany ceased, it is true, but it was succeeded by sensations much less pleasurable. A dull, heavy sense of suffering oppressed her,—a something more intolerable than pain. Hitherto she had de-

precated suspense, and at present she was compelled to pronounce its torture less exquisite than the agony she was now compelled to endure. It seemed as if Seymour had a smile for every body but her, who, in the deep prostration of her spirit, at this moment of the empire of passion, would have valued the least expression of his tenderness beyond the homage of a world. And then awakened the consciousness of all her former hopes, the recollection of all the thoughts and prospects which had been the purpose of her previous life. What was there in an union with Captain Seymour which could gratify the ambition which she had, hitherto, had pride in acknowledging to be the braver passion of her soul? Her union with him would necessarily result in a protracted residence in India, and a small independence at the close of their career. And was this the fulfilment of the destiny which birth, education, the gifts of nature, had marked out for Harriet Albany? Was it for this she had quitted her happy home? Was it for this she had relinquished the hundred alliances of equal value

that had been offered to her acceptance in England? Her judgment, her pride, revolted at the answer, but love deemed that *Seymour* more than counterpoised all the worldly advantages that had been the previous hope and aim of her existence.

Dinner began and ended, and still Harriet was attended by the assiduous Tomkins, and still Seymour extended neither look nor word to her, except the ordinary, and, considering her as one of the family of the Resident, indispensable ceremony of taking wine. His attention to Florence was quite as remarkable as his neglect of her unhappy friend, and the haughty spirit of Harriet burned to avenge itself.

The apparently interminable dinner at length ended. The ladies retired. Music, that substitute in all civilized countries which ignorance more frequently than feeling offers for conversation, was a resource gladly accepted by the ladies, to obviate that necessity for friendly chit-chat which is generally supposed to exist during the hour of their adjournment. Mrs. Norman had scarcely completed a single

aria, and had resigned her seat to the niece of her husband, when the gentlemen, after the short sederunt characteristic of Indian entertainments, joined them.

What inexplicable motive,—or, whether the spirit of coquetry which influenced so much of his existence, actuated Seymour, it is impossible to divine; but the fact is certain, that as soon as he perceived Harriet at the harp, he approached the instrument, and hung over it with looks which feelings far less interested than hers might have interpreted into love.

Her downcast eye,—the tremulousness of her touch, as she attempted to press the chords, did not render her less captivating in the eye of a practised man of the world. Even *he* softened, as he looked into the depths of that proud and haughty spirit, thus humbled and agitated before him. There was that in his countenance which Harriet had never yet seen there, and the re-action—the sudden admission of feelings of hope and triumph, broke the spell to which they owed their origin.

Seymour immediately began to address her

in the tone of light and unmeaning gallantry which woman least tolerates from the lips of the man she truly loves. In that species of artifice, however, Harriet was quite as much an adept as himself, and her secret indignation restored her self-command.

“This is the gayest party I have known at the Residency,” said Seymour. “One needs not be surprised, however; it never before contained such a magnet.”

“A pretty enough compliment, as far as it goes; but I fear so much used as nearly to be worn out,” returned Harriet, affecting gaiety.

“It is fortunate that amongst all its faults, it cannot be charged with oriental exaggeration,” returned Seymour.

“Now, indeed, you *have* left me immeasurably behind you,” said Harriet, smiling as brilliantly as if her heart were at peace. “Confess that I have sustained admirably my double rôle of musician and speaker. There is one advantage in music at a large party of this kind, nobody listens to it.”

“And if they did, I question whether the

feelings of the generality are not too obtuse to be much charmed with it. I have heard Miss Middleton sing with her seraph-voice, amidst a hum like the whisper of Babel."

"It would be cruel to ask her to sing this evening," said Miss Albany, with an air of affection; "you may see quite enough of the real state of affairs, by turning your eye towards the sofa on which she is seated."

Captain Seymour *did* turn his eye in the direction pointed out, and he saw, as much less observant people than himself could not fail of seeing, that Florence was completely engrossed by Mr. Travers.

"Are you really but just suspecting that engagement?" said he, with an air of compassionate surprise. "The whole cantonment of Kirkpore have already decided on the day of Miss Middleton's marriage with the happy Mr. Travers."

Harriet did not reply. She arose and quitted the harp, whilst Captain Seymour, of necessity, attended her to a seat.

"Mr. Travers is an enviable man," he re-

sumed. "He will find in the fair one he has chosen, all that can embellish existence,—all that can *endear* his home. This is precisely what a sensible man should contemplate as the results of his marriage. I look on the state only with the eye of a disinterested spectator, you know," he continued with a smile, "but it *has* occurred to me, that much of the misery attendant on married life, results from the egregious mistake those people fall into, who defer rather to the opinion of the world in selecting a wife, than to their own judgment. Nothing is more contagious than admiration; and for my own part, were I matrimonially inclined, which, as every body knows, is out of the question, I should be very suspicious of any preference for an acknowledged belle, the observed of all observers;—I should fear that I was rather following the track of the herd, than striking into a path which my own reason told me would lead to the desired goal."

Miss Albany had sufficient self-command to smile a reply, but she could not trust her voice. She felt the rebuke,—the indifference,—con-

veyed by this speech,—in the inmost recesses of her spirit. She could not seem to understand it,—for that would have rendered her ridiculous ;—she could not venture to retort a sarcasm, for that would have proved she had appropriated what was capable of a general interpretation. Above all, she was compelled to admit the full conviction that she, less, perhaps, than any other person in the world, was likely to be the object of Captain Seymour's preference.

And during the pause that followed, she could not help taking a rapid survey of the causes that had led to such a result. Conscience suggested her own coquetry as the least likely quality to attract a man, the business of whose life had been to excite an interest in almost every woman of any pretensions who had fallen in his way. This admission led her to another link in the chain of circumstances,—the education which had infused such an ingredient into her mind, or rather had prepared her for the indulgence of it as soon as her entrance into society afforded

an arena for its display. Then the recollection of her mother awoke a hundred precepts, illustrated by her example, which had made her what she was;—and with a sigh that had in it as much of condemnation as regret, she aroused herself from a reverie which had embraced so many objects in an interval of a few minutes.

She found the quick, and sometimes disagreeable eyes of Captain Seymour fixed on her with an expression that awakened all the womanly pride of her nature,—all the conventional pride of her education. “I was occupied with conjectures on the future happiness of my friend Florence,” she said with vivacity; “very impertinent conjectures, you will allow, considering how well she is provided with advisers.—However, I shall receive my punishment in the frowns of my uncle, who is looking at me with more anger than one would voluntarily excite. Pray lend me your arm across the room, that I may endeavour to propitiate him.”

“I fear there is a greater attraction there,” said he, assuming a softness of manner which

she felt, after the avowal he had just made, to be absolutely insulting. "Mr. Tomkins is at Mr. Norman's elbow, I perceive."

"Receiving a diplomatic lesson, probably," she replied, with a gracious smile. "You are aware that he is, on some yet unascertained day of this present *anno domini*, to be my uncle's successor."

"Is it positively ascertained?"

"One would not divulge the 'secrets of the prison house' to the profane," said she, with a gaiety the brighter, perhaps, from its sparkling most where the ice appeared ;—"I think, however, I may venture to say, *positively*.—Not another word, if you please. My uncle's fair wife looks ten thousand daggers."

Seymour was compelled to lead her to Mr. Norman, and to feel that, in the tactics of coquetry, she was, to say the least, his match ; probably he felt more interest for her on this occasion than he had ever before experienced, for he discovered that her passion was not strong enough to conquer her ambition, and that his triumph was confined to his own inter-

nal persuasion of the nature and extent of her feelings for him, which, however, had never been displayed in a manner sufficiently palpable to gratify his vanity by their publicity

The fate of Harriet Albany was now irrevocably decided. Animated by the gaiety around,—by the radiance of the smiles she vouchsafed to him,—by her gracious manner,—Mr. Tomkins found courage to make the proposal she had so long anticipated. Goaded by disappointment, anger, mortification, and the desire of such revenge as she believed her marriage would inflict on Seymour, she pronounced an *assent*, which was hardly uttered, when all the dreary future of her existence, with such a companion, seemed to extend in long perspective before her, and antedate the misery that must necessarily result from an union entered into from motives so unholy.

CHAPTER XI.

——— “My father,” said Mr. Travers to Colonel Middleton, on the morning after their return from the Residency, “was that most unfortunate being in the scale of society, a poor nobleman, with rank to support, and none of the ‘means and appliances’ necessary to sustain it. I have said that he *was* a poor noble;—that poverty, however, ceased to exist on his marriage. To escape from its evils, he married a woman whose origin he despised, and to whose person, I fear, he was indifferent, but whose wealth supplied—amply supplied—all the deficiencies of his own.

“The effect of his own early privations was to exaggerate, to his apprehension, the evils of

poverty and rank united, beyond even their due extent. The peerage descending, of course, to his eldest son, his anxiety was unbounded, not only to secure to that son all the property of my mother, but to accumulate as much as possible, by contracting his own expenses. The younger branches were provided for by appointments similar to my own; daughters, fortunately he had none; and we, being put in a condition to earn the bread we eat, by a gentlemanly sort of toil which neither touches his purse nor wounds his pride, are allowed to pursue a very independent mode of conduct, being enjoined only to one act of filial obedience,—never to trouble our noble father for pecuniary assistance.

“Two thousand pounds each is secured to me and my younger brothers, by marriage-settlement, and this, independently of my position in the service, is the entire amount of my worldly possessions.”

“It is not a very brilliant prospect, certainly,” said the colonel; but his benign counte-

nance softened the effect of his words. "However, my girl likes you,—and her mother is your advocate. She reminds me that I possessed scarcely so much on our marriage, and you are near your troop. Florence might possibly make a more advantageous alliance in a worldly point of view ; but let me say, there is no man I know to whom I would more willingly give her than to yourself."

Mr. Travers expressed his gratitude with all a lover's ardour, and he endured patiently a long exposition of Colonel Middleton's views of the law of entail, and all the evils connected with it;—four or five well-born paupers being generally, according to him, the necessary price at which overgrown wealth was secured to the possessor of aristocratic rank and its appendages.

If ever human being were in the possession of happiness, nearly perfect, it was Florence at this period. Assured of the affection of a man to whom her heart was fondly attached, and of whom her judgment was equally proud,—her choice, sanctioned by the approbation of the

parents she revered,—what was there wanting to the completion of her felicity?—Only the certainty that her union would not be followed by separation from those parents,—a result hardly to be contemplated for a long interval. And even when, at some distant time, Mr. Travers might be ordered to rejoin his own regiment, Colonel Middleton had reasonable grounds for believing that he could, by exerting his interest in the proper quarter, procure his own removal to the same or a near station.

Happy, therefore, in the present,—full of hope regarding the future,—contented with the unaspiring rôle that it would be her part to sustain in the great drama of human life,—Florence formed a strong contrast to her ambitious friend, Miss Albany.

The destiny of Harriet Albany was decided. She had accepted the proposals of Mr. Tomkins, a man who had, since the commencement of her acquaintance with him, been the object of her unqualified ridicule, and whose manners and person, whatever might be the respect due to the integrity of his character, were in the

highest degree repugnant to her taste. If the gratification of ambition could have satisfied the heart, hers might have reposed in the full attainment of its object;—but other and stronger passions had been called into being. Love, the existence of which the woman of fashion had affected to deride, had subdued her with the might of its omnipotent empire. Harriet loved—*in vain*; and the proud, humiliated spirit found its own punishment in the very means it had taken to avenge itself on him, who had dared to sport with its terrible feelings.

She herself will afford a closer insight into her feelings than can be given by any third person. At this critical juncture she wrote thus to Miss Middleton:—

“After all, then, my dear Florence,—supported by all the prudence of your father,—all the discretion of your mother,—all your own self-command,—you are, in reality, destined to sustain the undignified rôle of a subaltern’s wife, and I am to congratulate you on the prospect which is opening to you.

“Of the *man* who has fallen to your lot, I have little to say, because I have nothing to object to him. He is not to be found fault with, as men go in these days. You know, however, that in such cases the man, distinct from all the appendages and appurtenances which form his *social* existence, was always a very minor consideration in my plans for the future, and my theory will be sufficiently elucidated by my practice, as you will acknowledge, on learning that I have actually condescended to receive with favour the humble petition of honest John Tomkins, my devoted slave and servant, setting forth his pretensions to the honour of my fair hand, &c., &c., &c.

“Mr. Tomkins is altogether a very unexceptionable *parti*. One is not accountable for the defective manners and address of one's husband, which, after all, are of minor import with everybody of a sufficiently ascertained position. People who have to make their way in the world, do well to cultivate these passports to favour, but one who has rather patronage to bestow than to solicit, can afford to dis-

regard them. The temper of *my* future lord is quiet enough, and I am convinced he will allow me to follow my own peculiar tastes without any troublesome interference. To be sure he is fond of retirement and domestic felicity, and such like paradisaical illusions, which, I apprehend, have had little substantial existence since the expulsion of our first parents from Eden ; but the situation he is to fill will compel him to live in the world, and it will be strange indeed if the wife of the Resident of Kirkpore should be condemned to the horrors of solitude. In India, splendour and distinction will be secured by such an union, whilst my return to England,—the ultimate hope and object of every civilized being in this part of the world,—will be greatly approximated by it. Then, independent of his position, the character of honest John—(do not be shocked that I continue to call him so ;—recollect the hackneyed line of Pope ;)—is really respectable. The whole world give him credit for sound understanding, and for considerable acquirements. To be sure, the latter are exhibited so little, that one would

be apt to suspect they were like the country-man's gold, hidden so cunningly he could not find it himself. The reality, however, is of the less consequence, as he enjoys the reputation of possessing them. And it is not *having*, but being *thought* to have, which is the one thing necessary for consideration.

“If Mr. Tomkins were rather more conversant with the heart of woman, a person so diffident of himself as he is, might be likely to regret the absence of *sentiment* which so strongly characterizes our intercourse. Having quitted England before he knew anything of the *usages du monde* there, I suppose he attributes my coldness or composure,—call it by which name you will,—to the etiquette ordinarily observed by fiançées. ‘When ignorance is bliss,’tis folly to be wise,’ and you will at least allow that it is no part of my duty, or my *prudence*,—if you prefer the honester word,—to enlighten him.

“Behold us, then, dear Florence, prepared to perform the part for which dame Nature seems to have qualified us;—your motto ‘*all for love*,’ mine ‘*all for glory*.’ Happiness depends

so much on people's habits, education, constitution, that it would be idle to argue which has the fairer chance of it. No doubt we shall both of us be content;—I, from the conviction that it is *du meilleur ton* to endure with a good grace what is inevitable,—you from principle, duty, or religion, or some such motive, each greatly too sublime for me.

“ I need not recall to you a certain foolish exhibition on my part, which occurred when we were elevated into mid-air on the back of the tallest elephant in these parts as I am credibly informed. I assure you I attribute my sentimental flight to our elevated position on that occasion. My head was dizzy, I believe, and all things human appeared in a whirl. However, whatever transpired *then*, do me the credit to believe that the individual alluded to is *now* the object of a much stronger feeling than indifference,—I regard him with absolute aversion,—detestation. I know I shall appear a monster of wickedness and uncharitableness to you, but I confess nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to hear of some calamity over-

taking him equal to his deserts,—and severe indeed would it be !—Do you see much of him ? —I trust he regrets your marriage more than he would willingly allow people to believe. He has not visited the Residency since you quitted it,—an omission for which, to say truth, I am really obliged to him. That he would keep out of my sight henceforwards for ever, is the only obligation I could consent to receive from him. Now that an insuperable barrier is raised between him and me, my amiable aunt, who always hitherto held him in utter abomination, has become most voluble in his praises. She is never weary of the theme, being animated to perseverance by the praiseworthy motive of annoying me.—Is not this a benevolent temper, and can you not imagine the galling satire with which I delight to repay the debt she forces on my gratitude ? No—no—you cannot imagine these dark doings of human hearts ;—how could the daughter of *your* mother ? And yet I mean no reflection on my own. Either we are born with different passions and feelings,—or we make ourselves ;—

but metaphysics are not my forte. You know, whenever I have attempted them, your father has always convicted me of falling into some such utter absurdity as would make even horrible Mrs. Huggins blush, were her complexion susceptible of any change of hue.

“ Could anything be more delightful than that Seymour, in spite of all his caution, and selfishness, and valuing of himself, should fall into the toils of this woman, and actually propose for her protégée — her toady,—Mrs. Roland? Such a consummation would indeed be an overpayment for all the suffering he has caused me. *Suffering!*—‘What is writ, is writ!’ The word has escaped my pen, and I will not blot it out.

“ And this is India, Florence!—And why might not either you or I have done as well, as wisely, as happily for ourselves in England? To be sure you are in love, as it is called, with Mr. Travers,—but as I do not believe in the Indian fable of the twin-birth of souls, I doubt not you would have found some object equally to your taste without quitting the temperate zone. Subalterns are plentiful everywhere,

and the little *affix* of 'honourable' gives no particular increase of dignity. The elder brother is unfortunately a very healthy person, and likely to sustain the character of head of the house of Travers, not only in his own person but in those of his direct descendants. Fortune, the old earl will not bestow on the younger branches,—all Mr. Travers's expectations, therefore, depend on the service, and these can offer nothing to tempt avarice or ambition for many, many years to come. Then, do you think you need have made a voyage of fifteen thousand miles, for the sake of an alliance like this?

“ On the other hand, consider *my* prospects. Let us pass over the few years I meditate remaining in the east, and contemplate my position on my return to my native land,—the only words savouring of sentiment that I can endure.—After all, I shall be but the wife of a country gentleman of moderate fortune, with a tolerable place, and a reputation for thrice the wealth we possess, and for ostentation, prodigality, indolence, stupidity, and love

of curries and mulligatawny,—things holden in abomination by all true believers in the divinity of fashion. Did you ever hear of the wife of a returned nabob, amongst the patronesses of Almack's? I trow not. Thrice happy she, if permitted the entrée there under a sacrifice at the shrine of Mammon of which it becomes not me to speak more particularly, seeing I have been admitted, under peculiar circumstances, to a peep behind the scenes. Am I, therefore, repaid for the perils of those who travel by sea or land?—*Abundantly*,—they would answer who consider matrimony the great end of woman's life, and who reflect with how much difficulty a suitable establishment is secured in this our day.—And my mother—she at least will be satisfied, and that is a gratification not to be despised by one who finds but few sources of pleasure in her own mind.

“Why are women educated entirely with a view to marriage? Why is it impressed on them, even from their childhood, that this is the sole object for which accomplishments are to

be acquired, and labour and time expended? Why are we not permitted to know that there is a chance of happiness independent of the caprice of men?—that it does not necessarily follow, that because a woman is not a wife, she must be either miserable or despised? Why are we not taught to find in ourselves our sources of happiness? Why do ambitious mothers direct all their efforts to rid themselves of the beings they have reared with tenderness, and whose companionship might otherwise be the solace of their age? That such things are, I know, but *why* I cannot discover, except that all in this artificial world is as remote from truth as the lying vanities of man can render it.

“ Adieu, dear Florence.—I have written you a homily. May you be as happy as you deserve, and, to do your man justice, he promises well. As to myself, notwithstanding the gloomy vein of thought that *would* flow over this fair sheet of vellum, do me the favour to believe, I am not exactly in a state of mind *à se faire pendre*.

“ *As yet,*

“ HARRIET ALBANY.”

CHAPTER XII.

Mrs. Huggins, surrounded by her satellites, sat in her hall. On a table in the centre stood a china vase filled with gorgeous flowers, amongst which the rich pomegranate blossom held a proud pre-eminence. A punkah, vigorously pulled, circulated the air agreeably even in one of those still days of the monsoon, when the whole atmosphere seems converted into steam. All nature was in a lull, except when a musky odour occasionally pervaded the apartment, and gave evidence of the vicinity and activity of that constant occupant of houses in India,—the musk-rat.

Calm, however, as was the spirit of the hour, Mrs. Huggins was *not* calm. Wrath sat enshrined on a brow, the furrows of which seemed

the proper abode of all such hideous feelings. Her lips were compressed, and the thousand lines about her mouth were more *prononçés* than usual. Her whole countenance expressed a sense of injury united with a resolute desire of revenge. Even her pet spaniel sat at a distance, gazing on the evidences of perturbation of which his own instinct told him to avoid the possible, active effects. Mrs. Roland was engaged in pulling to pieces a very fine branch of "India's pride," as splendid a flower, albeit a native of the jungles, as flourishes in the east. Mrs. Harding, who, when silent, shared the usual English incapacity of disposing of her hands, was occupied in indefatigable performance of that species of *devil's tattoo* which is called the *twirling of the thumbs*. Ensign Simms adjusted the sleeves of his white calico jacket, and admired the polish of his boots, produced by an eastern composition that would have been a second fortune to Day and Martin. Lieutenant Mac Whalley by turns whistled and paced the hall in a pair of boots of European manufacture, which creaked like the machinery

of a steam-engine. Captain Summers was reading the Madras Gazette, interrupting his progress only by occasional "pshaws!" and other ejaculations expressive of disapprobation. Major Bing had the air of abstraction peculiar to those engaged in the intellectual employment of *invention*, and was probably concocting reports which enlivened the cantonment of Kirkpore during the ensuing twelve months. And Colonel Huggins himself—the liege lord of the lady of the ascendant—had ventured to take refuge from the dulness of the passing hour, in the enjoyment of sleep, sheltered by the half dozen pillows which contributed to the luxury of the couch on which he lay extended, a gentle murmur being the only indication of animal existence with which the ears of the party were assailed.

"A wedding!—commend me to such weddings!" said Mrs. Huggins, with a vehemence and a suddenness that came upon the party like an electric shock. "People must be very much ashamed of something, who court privacy in affairs of that kind, to which every-

body else contrives to give as much celebrity as possible. Well, I thank heaven, when I married you, Colonel Richard Huggins — asleep as I live! What are you doing there, Colonel? There was no drill this morning to fatigue you. You are certainly the idlest, most stupid, most disagreeable — caring for no earthly creature but yourself, and entering into none of our feelings — monster! Ah, Dicky, Dicky! — you are the picture of your poor uncle, and there's no denying it!"

At the sound of this ominous allusion Colonel Huggins immediately started up, appeased the ire of his lady by a hundred apologies, and addressed himself to obey the present word of command, "*attention!*" with as much promptitude as if every weary muscle of his body did not warn him of the preferable order to "*stand at ease!*"

"Mrs. Roland," resumed the objurgatory lady of the mansion, expending her ire in a new direction, "you are indeed idly occupied. My boys have quite sufficient occupation without picking up all the litter you choose to

make. I wonder, for my part, what spirit of stupidity is come over you all. You, Mrs. Harding, generally find enough to say when people don't wish to listen to you, and like all other foolish persons, you are still when you might find plenty to talk about. Simms, your white jacket is clean enough, and your hot hands won't improve it. I hope you find the newspaper amusing, Captain Summers; if there is anything worth reading you might, in common politeness, give all of us the benefit of it."

"There is nothing, I assure you," said Captain Summers, with the benevolent intention of pacifying the *tigress*.

"Then put it aside; what is the use of fixing your eyes on a quantity of print which, after all, is *nothing*? Mac Whalley, sit down. Your boots fidget me to death. Why don't you order your dressing boy to oil them? I desire you never venture here in them again. Europe boots, indeed, for a subaltern! I never heard of such extravagance. Country boots have served your betters and might serve you.

No wonder you are over head and ears in debt."

Mac Whalley laughed, and assured her that he was so sensible of the inconvenience and unpleasantness attending such a state of affairs, that he was contemplating an appeal to the benevolent in the hope of escaping from it, and relied on her known generosity for permission to place her name at the head of the list of subscribers.

"Not a rupee, not an anna, you may swear," said Mrs. Huggins angrily, who, being herself addicted to jesting with all the world, yet understood every species of irony or *persiflage* in others *au pied de la lettre*. "Nobody ought to be in debt. You were scandalously involved when I married you, Colonel Huggins; but for me you would have been a ruined man."

"You have so often told me so, my dear, that I am bound to believe it," replied *Dicky bahadur* who had no dislike to allusions to the dashing days of his early extravagance.

"Well, I mean to marry, myself, if all other means of release fail me," said Mac Whalley.

"*You !*" cried Mrs. Huggins, with an air of

supreme contempt. "Who, on this earth, do you think would be mad enough, or foolish enough, to take a sixth lieutenant involved in debt, with neither person, manners, nor character to recommend him? No, no; women are idiots enough to be sure, but that would be rather too bad, even for Mrs. Roland, who, poor soul, is as anxious after a second husband as ever she was for a first,—which is saying a great deal, if report is to be believed."

"You are so witty!" said Mrs. Roland making an effort to smile, but in reality writhing beneath this allusion to the notorious fact of the pains she took to secure her late husband, a man generally pronounced as impracticable as could be imagined, and whom she had taken as a *dernier ressort* in the third year of her residence in India.

"Yes, I am witty at times, but not now, my dear. This is not wit, but plain matter of fact," said Mrs. Huggins, drily.

"Nobody but you would venture to say a word against my character," said Mac Whalley

sullenly. "If I were not sure you did but jest I should"—he hesitated.

"You would eat your dinner, as you will do presently," said Mrs. Huggins, than who no one better knew the precise moment in which to interrupt a speech likely to have an unpleasant termination. "Well, Major Bing, as you did not see, and can know nothing about this wedding, you can of course give us a detail of its minutest circumstances, even to the blushes of the bride."

"You are too severe," said Major Bing, whose inveterate good temper enabled him to laugh even at such an accusation. "I assure you, all the little mistakes I make, are the effects of inadvertence, or lapses of memory, for which no man can be accountable. As to the marriage to which you have alluded, I have too high an opinion of the principal actors in it, to venture a word for which I have not unexceptionable authority,"—an assertion which Major Bing was aware would be most unacceptable to his interrogator, but which he made in the

belief, that he was too essential a source of amusement to be "whistled down the wind," even for a much graver offence.

"Your praise must be valuable, judging how much people are afflicted at your censure," said Mrs. Huggins, bitterly.

"Why yes, I flatter myself my opinion is not altogether without weight," said Major Bing with a *bonhommie* which, even if assumed, became him.

"You *do* flatter yourself," retorted Mrs. Huggins, who never allowed so palpable a point of attack to escape her. "But one cannot be surprised at that, after you have expended a compliment on Lieutenant Travers and his wife."

"Would that I deserved it as well!" said Major Bing, with an emphasis which he designed to be sentimental. "I know not a person in the world whose favour I should be more desirous of cultivating than that of the Honourable Mrs. Travers."

"You delight in pronouncing her style and title, I perceive," said Mrs. Huggins with a

bitter sneer, she being quite inclined to insist on all the privileges conferred by her husband's rank and standing in the service, and exceedingly anxious to undervalue any claims to precedence resulting from another source. "If I understand any thing of rank in England, the younger son of a poor peer is one of the most pitiable beings in the whole scale of society."

"The father of Travers is not a poor peer," said Major Bing. "He had the misfortune, to be sure, to inherit poverty with his title, but he redeemed it by the discretion of marrying a woman who paid largely for the privilege of sharing his honours."

"We have *your* authority for that," said Mrs. Huggins, her malice finding consolation in the character of Major Bing, whose notoriety was such as to bring all the truths he uttered by accident, under the imputation of falsehood.

"I assure you I am not reading you a chapter from the Apocrypha now," said Major Bing, laughing good humouredly. "The Resident himself was my authority, who is rather mystified that Colonel Middleton should con-

sent to his daughter's marrying a man obnoxious to official displeasure."

"The Resident has more sense than I gave him credit for," returned Mrs. Huggins. "I think it very much against the character of any old officer that he should uphold insubordination, which Middleton may fairly be suspected of doing, when we look at the encouragement he has given to Travers ever since his arrival. My Colonel had more discretion, though, if any body had a right to feel angry with the people in the Adjutant-General's office, he had.—To be superseded by a person only a few months his senior, was not a thing to be forgotten,"—and Mrs. Huggins twirled the small circular * cuscus punkah she held in her hand most vehemently.

"Interest does every thing," said Mrs. Harding, whose office in the circle of the *burra bebe saib*, was generally that of listener, or at most of echo. "Look at the young captains in command of corps, and see how poor Harding is passed over."

* A fragrant kind of grass.

"I hope you do not pretend to compare Harding with Richard Huggins," retorted Mrs. Huggins, with asperity.

"He is nearly as old an officer, though so unfortunate in promotion," said Mrs. Harding, with greater firmness than usual; for she was remarkably tenacious on the point of her husband's claims, who was, in fact, as unfortunate in his position in the service as she had stated him to be.

"What is that to me, or to anybody but yourselves? I hate people who can hear nothing without bringing it to bear on their own paltry concerns."

"No one thinks his own affairs paltry," said Mrs. Harding, whose Irish temperament was beginning to kindle with all the warmth said to be a national characteristic.

"The greater the pity," retorted Mrs. Huggins, triumphing in the point of this pithy rejoinder. "People would be spared a great deal of the everlasting *paish** poured upon society by those who have the least right to talk."

* Chatter.

“ I am sure then, that society must consider you a heavy offender,” said Mrs. Harding, so thoroughly roused as to forget, in the vehemence of her ire, all the luxuries and conveniencies which rendered Colonel Huggins’s house so convenient a resort to those, the great object of whose existence was to save, and who, of course, were always glad to live at any table but their own.

“ It is a pity your improvement in politeness does not keep pace with your improvement in wit,” said Mrs. Huggins, whose temperature was rising rapidly to boiling heat.

“ I have been so much with you of late, that I have begun to resemble you,” said Mrs. Harding, endeavouring at sarcastic calmness.

“ Then, madam, I beg you never to come near me again !” exclaimed Mrs. Huggins, quite *in alt*. “ I desire you to leave my house instantly. I have deserved your abominable, ungrateful conduct, by offending so many people on your account, and by receiving you when half the cantonment shut their doors on you. Where

are Mrs. Harding's bearers? Some of you order her tonjon. Good morning. I hope you will find the next person's table at which you secure a seat as much to your liking as mine has been, if I may judge by your frequent kindness in being an uninvited guest at it."

"And, for my part, I trust you will add to the number of your female associates, for they are sadly in the minority, at present,—the greater portion of the ladies of the cantonment having a character to lose," said Mrs. Harding, as she flung out of the hall and threw herself into her tonjon, refusing the reluctant aid of Messieurs Mac Whalley and Simms, neither of whom were forward in offering any attention to a person so thoroughly in disgrace with their patroness.

Mrs. Huggins twirled her little hand-punkah more vehemently than ever. She felt the silence which succeeded the departure of her quondam friend, and she saw the necessity of breaking it without exactly knowing how,—a state of discomfort which most people have experi-

enced in the course of their lives. Captain Summers relieved her embarrassment, by adverting to some paragraph in the newspaper, which he still held in his hand.

“Very extraordinary, to be sure,” said Mrs. Huggins, “but not half so extraordinary as the abominable, ungrateful conduct of that wretched woman, Mrs. Harding. No one knows what I have done for her;—the presents I have made her,—the money I have lent her. I never pretend, for my part, to keep the secrets of people who behave so scandalously as she has done. I suppose I shall have all of you at enmity with me some of these days.”

“Oh, impossible! my dear creature, how can you judge so hardly of us?” lisped Mrs. Roland. “We are not quite so bad as that;—I am sure I can speak confidently of myself.”

“I believe you, for until you are married, it would not be quite so convenient to break with me,” said Mrs. Huggins, who estimated the professions of her friend precisely at their proper value.

Mrs. Roland coloured, but in the present

temper of her hostess, she deemed it prudent to hazard no other reply than a smile.

“What could you expect from Mrs. Harding?” said Ensign Mac Whalley,—“the most vulgar woman in the cantonment; and Harding himself the coarsest fellow in it. I have often wondered how you came to be so intimate with these people.”

“Harding belongs to my own regiment,” said Colonel Huggins, with an importance worthy of the profundity of his remark;—“every commanding officer should encourage his subordinates, if they be at all tolerable. I must confess, I rather regret this unfortunate fracas. The quarrels of the ladies of a corps are generally the source of all the dissensions in it.”

“So they are,” said Mac Whalley, with an eagerness that rather exceeded the boundaries of discretion. “When a man marries, I consider him lost to the service.”

“Do you, indeed?” said Mrs. Huggins, whose asperity was not yet softened, and who was by no means disinclined to turn it in a new direc-

tion. “*Your* opinion, certainly, is valuable. Your standing in the army must give it abundant weight. If marriage ruins an officer in his profession, *you* are likely to escape well, for I will insure you against being accepted by any woman in the world, if you were to make proposals once a month. You have had more than one *juwâb* * already.”

Lieutenant Mac Whalley was wounded in the tenderest point. He insisted so constantly on his aversion to matrimony, that this violation of the confidence he had, in an unguarded moment, poured into the willing ear of Mrs. Huggins, was doubly cruel, and he shrunk from the ridicule which, he foresaw, would attack him as soon as this disclosure was spread abroad,—a result which, judging from the character and numbers of the audience, he was quite sure would occur with all possible speed.

“What, have *you* ever thought of marrying, Mac Whalley?” asked Ensign Simms, with an air of unfeigned astonishment, for it was the

* Literally, *answer*,—but applied as in the text, always meaning a *refusal*.

last weakness of which he would have suspected his friend.

"The wisest of us have our moments of folly," said Mac Whalley, doggedly.

"And to those who are not quite Solomons, they are of pretty frequent occurrence," said Mrs. Huggins, with a sneer which tried Mac Whalley's patience to the uttermost, and which might have ended in an entire rupture but for the opportune announcement of tiffin, which produced an immediate termination of hostilities in the belligerent parties.

As the meal advanced, it had the usual effect of restoring the party to their ordinary amiability. Mrs. Huggins, instead of stinging the present, turned her thoughts to the absent, who had, in truth, been the real cause of her unquiet mood this morning.

"So you can tell us all about the wedding, can you, Bing?" she inquired with tolerable temper.

"The bride was dressed in a Dacca muslin, with no ornaments," returned Major Bing, with

the air of a man stating real, substantial matter of fact. "The bridegroom wore his dress-regimentals. Present: the *padre* *,—the couple to be married,—the parents of the bride,—Miss Albany, as bride's-maid,—not another soul.—The quietest thing of the kind that ever occurred in any part of India."

"Very prudently so," said Colonel Huggins. "An officer of Colonel Middleton's standing, who, in the very teeth of official authority, selects a young man in Mr. Travers's circumstances as his son-in-law, does well to avoid any unnecessary parade. I rather apprehend he will find it not the wisest step his daughter might have taken."

"Dickey, my dear, shall I give you some of this pilau?" said Mrs. Huggins, whose approbation of her husband's sentiments was evinced by this little display of conjugal attention.

"Travers is to live at Colonel Middleton's," resumed Major Bing; "so that the expense of the ménage will not, at present, fall on the young couple."

* Clergyman.

“ I don’t approve arrangements of that kind,” said Mrs. Roland. “ The ideas of young people and old are so very different ! I never expect much happiness to result from such family unions.”

“ Nor I,” said Mrs. Huggins, becoming more amiable, as she found her guests falling into that vein most acceptable to herself. “ I have heard that Mrs. Middleton is not quite so mild and amiable as she appears.”

“ I never give your over-clever women credit for much of *that*,” said Captain Summers, who had every possible right to revile a class with whom, of necessity, he stood so ill.

“ I do not imagine the marriage arrangements depended on any considerations of policy,” said Major Bing. “ Mrs. Middleton, you know, has a singular taste, and I dare say has every thing her own way. Middleton is a very good kind of man, but I don’t think he is exactly commanding officer in his own house.”

“ Nothing renders a man more contemptible than allowing his wife to usurp an authority which nature and the established laws of so-

ciety clearly vest in the husband," said Colonel Huggins, with the greater emphasis, as his actual conjugal subjugation rendered such a demonstration the more necessary.

"I can only say, that I sincerely wish Mr. Travers were removed from our regiment," observed Mrs. Huggins, who thought the subject was taking a tone that might degenerate into very unpleasant personalities. "It is not the most desirable thing in the world to have a man in one's corps who gives himself all manner of airs, and thinks nothing of declining an invitation from his commanding officer."

"There *were* days when such offences were not allowed to pass unnoticed," said Colonel Huggins, with a sigh of fond regret for the good old times. "Five-and-twenty years since, when I was a young subaltern, I recollect a certain captain, who was not on good terms with the officer commanding the Force to which he was attached;—not that any actual disagreement had occurred, — nothing more than a quiet dislike of each other, manifested by

the Colonel in such military annoyances as people in power *can* have recourse to, and by the captain in confining himself to the very letter of the regulations, and avoiding all intercourse with his superior that was not strictly official. It was this point which at last afforded the Colonel a vantage-ground. He sent the captain an invitation to dine, which was rejected on the plea of a pre-engagement. The Colonel immediately sent a chit containing only the simple question, 'If Captain —— had *not* been pre-engaged, would he have dined with Colonel ——?' To which the pithy reply was returned,—'If captain —— had *not* been pre-engaged, he would *not* have dined with Colonel ——.' The note was handed to the then Commander-in-chief, and by him laid before the notorious Sir ——, at that time Governor, who immediately *suspended Captain —— the service, until the pleasure of the Court of Directors was known*; and this suspension was eventually *confirmed* and rendered perpetual, being, in fact, *dismissal**.—Rank had its privi-

* A melancholy fact in the annals of military despotism !

leges in those days, and youngsters held their superiors in proper respect."

"I am glad I did not belong to those days, then," said Lieutenant Mac Whalley, whose occasional impetuosity would have led him into danger, but for the shield of Mrs. Huggins's favour. "It was rather too bad to walk a man over the surf, because he chose to refuse the dinner some *big wig* offered him. If the Commander-in-chief had a bad cook, — *I* would not dine with him; I would not submit to being poisoned with an indifferent curry for any man living."

"Hold your tongue, Mac Whalley," said Mrs. Huggins, peremptorily. "You talk nonsense, — and, Colonel, we don't want to hear tales of your young days; — they have been gone long since. I am inquiring about the wedding, and you are constantly referring to military matters."

"A *past* wedding is almost as old as past youth," said Major Bing, with the amiable intention of keeping the sovereign lady in good temper. "Let us talk of another yet to be. I

suppose you all know it is a settled thing between Tomkins and Miss Albany."

"I should not have believed it on *your* word," said Mrs. Huggins, with her usual politeness; "but Summers brought the news this morning. I did not think Tomkins had been such a fool."

"And for my part, I gave Miss Albany credit for better taste," said Captain Summers, adjusting his shirt collar.

"You don't think any girl in her senses would refuse a man in Tomkins's position, surely?" said Major Bing. "He is a very good kind of fellow, and old Norman goes home immediately to put him in possession of the Residency."

"I wish Tomkins may not repent his choice," said Mrs. Huggins, with a manner which expressed her conviction that he would have ample cause.

"Every married man does that some time or other," said Major Bing, laughing at his own piquant jest; "and really, I don't think Tomkins will have much cause to complain of his

destiny if he gets a handsome and elegant wife, which Miss Albany certainly will be."

"Ah! beauty and elegance! Those are just the things by which men are caught," said Mrs. Huggins. "At the end of a year a man cares very little about the colour of his wife's eyes or the shape of her gown. As to Miss Albany, she is the most complete flirt I ever saw in my life,—an impertinent, conceited, lump of affectation, giving herself so many English airs and graces, as if a woman not born in England was not worthy of a glance. If ever she is mistress of the Residency, we shall see a change for the worse. Mrs. Norman is bad enough, but she is too great a fool to do much mischief. If Tomkins is wise, he will take care that Seymour is not often at his house. I fancy Miss Albany would have had no objection to take Seymour for better or worse, if he had offered himself. She was jealous to death of the girl Travers has married. I quite expected to hear of Seymour's proposing for the little fair-faced Middleton."

"How do we know he did not?" said Major

Bing. "It is like the Middleton family, to keep the matter secret."

"I cannot suspect Captain Seymour of any such intention," said Mrs. Roland, colouring with indignation.

"How should you, having so long lavished attentions on him yourself in vain?" said Mrs. Huggins. "Any but the wilfully blind might see his attachment to her, and if he did *not* propose, rely on it, it was only from the want of encouragement. I can forgive the girl a great deal for the mortification she has inflicted on Seymour. Travers, to be sure, is the greatest wretch on earth, and I wish we could manage to get him removed. Yes, I really *do* wish, Colonel, that you would exert yourself to get him ordered to join his own regiment,"—with which emphatic repetition Mrs. Huggins rose, and terminated "the feast of reason and the flow of soul!"

CHAPTER XIII.

To wish and to effect, if within the compass of possibility, were with Mrs. Huggins one and the same thing.

What might be the purport of Colonel Huggins's communication to the Adjutant-General of the army it is impossible to divine, inasmuch as that communication did not pass through the official channel, but was strictly private and confidential. The result, however, was the immediate publication of a general order, directing Lieutenant the Honourable Henry Travers to rejoin his regiment forthwith.

Unexpected as such an order was to the family of Colonel Middleton, and much as it affected their domestic happiness, they made no attempt to procure a revocation of it.—

Colonel Middleton would not allow his feelings as a father to interfere with his prudence as a man, or his principles as an officer. He considered every officer in a more honourable and respectable position when with his own regiment, than when with a strange corps. He was not insensible to the effect Travers's being placed again under the command of an individual who had already so severely persecuted him, must have on the comfort of his own life, and consequently on that of a wife who was so tenderly attached to him. Colonel Middleton, however, thought that his son-in-law should not shrink from encountering it. He would have the advantage of being surrounded by men who regarded him with the highest esteem, and whose opinion must be some check even on the despotism of a military tyrant. Moreover, being deprived of his staff-appointment, he must necessarily be less liable to the Colonel's power of annoyance than when, as Adjutant, he was brought daily into immediate contact with him. Colonel Middleton gave Travers credit for such

austere self-command as would secure him from any rashness which might place his commission in jeopardy. It could hardly be expected, that, in common decency, his commandant would use his power to compel him to submit to any social intercourse. With reference to the past, such a line of conduct seemed out of the question, and thus the greatest difficulty was hardly of possible occurrence.

Mrs. Middleton felt, with all a mother's anguish, the pain of parting with the beloved of her heart, but she was able to reflect that this was a circumstance not unfamiliar to her mind. A person of her sober judgment could hardly have contemplated the marriage of her daughter in India, without associating that event with a long separation. She even tried to think it desirable, that her child should be compelled to act for herself in a more independent manner than could be necessary whilst she remained under her father's roof. She felt it wise, that firmness should be acquired in youth,—that firmness without which our best virtues are but so many temptations, placing

us in the power of the viciously resolute. She acknowledged, also, that it might be for the advantage of the young pair to depend much on each other for their happiness,—to be thrown for a time on their own resources, before they had acquired the unfortunate habit of dependence and reliance on a support which, in the natural course of things, must eventually be withdrawn. But in despite of her *reason*, the mother's *heart* was pained, and bitter indeed were the tears she shed during the weary wakeful nights which preceded the departure of her child.

Florence, with the natural timidity of a young and inexperienced mind, shrank from the contemplation of the parting which awaited her. She rather carried her thoughts into a remoter future, when her father would have applied for removal to the station where her husband's regiment was cantoned,—nay, when he might possibly be appointed to the command of that very regiment. It is a benevolent disposition of Providence, that in youth, before the mind has attained, by maturity, sufficient

strength to support the real evils of human life, it views them always through the medium of hope, and alleviates present suffering by the confident expectation of future good.

Perhaps none regretted the approaching departure of Mrs. Travers more sincerely than Miss Albany. About to enter on the most sacred connexion with a man in whose favour neither her heart nor her judgment was enlisted, she regarded, with a new and unusual feeling of affection, a being who had been her companion in so many strange scenes, her confidante by accident, and to whom she was able to speak with less restraint than to any other person. She yielded to the wishes of her uncle for the early celebration of her marriage, in order that she might have the comfort of Florence's presence at this decisive epoch of her destiny,—a concession for which, as he was happily ignorant of the predominant motive, poor Mr. Tomkins was grateful as lover ought to be.

Though guided by a principle very different from that which had actuated Florence, Miss

Albany desired that her marriage should be celebrated with equal privacy. If invitations had been given to any of the military of the station, Seymour, as a staff officer, must have been one of the guests, and she could not endure his presence at the sacrifice. Although anger, justifiable anger, and contempt, had drowned the voice of kindlier sentiments, she shrunk from encountering, at such a moment, him whom she believed no stranger to the unsolicited passion with which she had regarded him. Private, therefore, was the celebration of her nuptials, and the melancholy which shaded the manner of the bride throughout the ceremony, and during the subsequent week, was attributed by herself to her approaching separation from a friend she had known in England,—that tie in itself so strong amongst Indian exiles,—and who was, besides, the daughter of the early, the bosom friend of her mother.

If anything had been wanting to increase the secret misery of the new-made wife, the constant and loud exultation of her uncle would have supplied it. Nothing, he said, in

the whole course of his previous existence, had afforded him so much gratification as that a niece of his should become the wife of so valuable a man as Tomkins,—who was to be, moreover, his successor in an office of which he had experienced all the ease and the dignity. He doubted whether he had enjoyed greater triumph when he himself won *his* fair lady from so many competitors. Flushed with the success of his favourite project, he incessantly demanded the congratulations of his friends, and was not satisfied without constantly pouring into the unwilling ears of his niece his felicitations on an event, the actual occurrence of which she had not yet learned to contemplate without a shudder.

Mrs. Norman said little, which rendered her presence more tolerable than usual. She was divided between regret at her approaching abdication of the *Residential* throne, and the pleasure she derived from a secret belief, that the heart of her husband's niece was not engrossed by the man whom she had solemnly vowed "to love and honour." She hated

Harriet with all the malignity of a small mind which finds itself excelled in the very endowments, on the foundation of which it had erected the fabric of its own pitiful vanity. Her own experience forbade her indulging the expectation,—it may be said, *the hope*,—that the mere fact of her marrying a man for whom she had no decided preference, would necessarily entail misery, but she cherished a suspicion shared by many others, that Harriet secretly entertained a violent passion for Captain Seymour. She could not possibly gratify herself by any open allusion to Seymour, but she made frequent inquiries after him of the occasional visitors at the Residency, which she always took care should be heard by the bride. And Harriet *was* an enforced auditor both of the questions and answers, but no changing cheek, no quailing eye, betrayed the strife that warred within.

It was the evening preceding her final separation from Florence. Once again, and for the last time, they set forth together to enjoy the balmy evening air on an elephant. The coun-

tenance of each was perturbed, for the affections of the young are easily knit together, and separation seems to rend for ever links which they would not wish sundered. The first mile of their progress was spent in silence, broken at length by Harriet.

“ You are a happy girl, Florence!” she said, with such a smile as bespeaks the compassion of the gazer. “ Ambition never was the weakness of your character, and you may spend all its tenderness in a legitimate channel.”

“ It *is* a happiness,” said Florence, with a downcast eye; for she was yet so young a wife as to blush under a direct allusion to her devoted attachment to her husband.

“ But, do not even *you*, with your single-mindedness, believe that the gratification of ambition may afford quite as much — what shall I call it? — satisfaction — enjoyment, — to a heart which cherishes it, — woos it, perhaps, as a substitute for those softer feelings which are said to make the destiny of woman? *Here* — in this Indian world — I shall shine as a star of the first magnitude, and it is only to remain

here a few years longer for the purposes of accumulation, to insure my shining forth, in the meridian of my existence, amongst the most splendid luminaries even of an European world. That in itself is something. And then to reflect, Florence, that tidings of my brilliant marriage are even now travelling westwards, and will in a few, a very few months, render my poor mother happy ! And she loves me, Florence !—yes, devoted as she is to the vanities of the world, I was yet her idol,—even when she sacrificed me !” And unbidden tears rolled down the pale cheeks of the speaker, as memory dwelt on the unhappy parent, whose influence had impressed on her young heart the principles which had too peremptorily dictated her line of conduct.

“ You are the wife of a man whom it is impossible not to esteem,” said Florence, soothingly. “ The respect — the consideration — conceded by others, must doubtless be yielded by his wife. In his intercourse with you, that reserve will disappear which obscures the higher faculties of his mind in his association

with comparative strangers, and it is something to be permitted to penetrate a sanctuary, the riches of which are revealed to us alone."

"It is somewhat!" said Harriet, with a glowing brow. "But oh, if one has learnt too late that esteem—respect—are but cold sentiments in comparison with those of which one's heart is capable! If torn by conflicting feelings,—duty on the one side, and the esteem of which you speak; on the other, passion,—a compound of mingled elements, in which one knows not whether love or hate hath the ascendancy,—what are we *then*, Florence?—But why do I ask?—It is a state of which you are in blessed ignorance, and which no description will enable you to comprehend."

Florence became even paler than her companion. "Surely *now*," she said, "as the wife of an honourable and estimable man, whatever may have been former feelings, surely *now* you can entertain none which may not be revealed to him who has rendered you the depository of his honour and happiness."

“So saith duty—principle,—according to the conventional justice and judgment of this world,” replied Harriet, with bitterness. “But think you that same conventional prejudice hath ever yet curbed a single passion, albeit it may have checked its display? No, no;—hearts like mine are made of materials too tough to be swayed by the breath of opinion; and something within me says, that there *are* passions more imperious even than ambition.”

“Listen not to that voice,” said Florence, with unwonted energy, a burning crimson mantling on her cheek, and a sparkle of intense animation kindling in her eye. “You have chosen your part in this world’s drama, dear Harriet, and it is too late now to doubt the wisdom of your decision. The question is no longer a hesitation between love and ambition. You are the wife of the man who gratifies the latter, and any thought of him for whom you might, perhaps, have indulged the former, becomes criminal. Henceforwards there is no choice left, and it is incumbent—imperative on

you—to sustain with dignity,—according to the dictates of principle,—of religion,—the part you have chosen.”

“That is *reason*,—the results of the education you have had,” said Harriet, with less emotion than before. “I, however, have not been so disciplined, and consequently a victory over my own feelings is more difficult than anything you can imagine. However, we have had enough of sentiment for this occasion, and we will, if you please, talk of other matters;—of the envy, *par exemple*, with which you will regard me installed in all the comforts and honours appertaining to the lady-mistress of the Residency, when you will be two hundred miles hence, buried in the depths of the almost impenetrable jungle.”

“I shall envy you, for you will be near my father and mother,” said Florence, with the simple pathos of truth.

Harriet felt rebuked. “But then,” she continued, as if to make the *amende honorable*, “you will have by your side the *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, who is henceforth to be

your polar star, and whose light, you are quite certain, will never lead astray. Where fortitude is required, you are to soothe him into endurance; and where bravery is requisite, he is to animate you into courage. You are to be all the world to each other,—a position most especially illustrated by a couple of married lovers, who, for two months, see not a single face the complexion of which is less dusky than the night, and who probably are the only civilized beings within a circumference of two or three hundred miles.”

“ I have been, during so many years, familiar with the possibility of having to encounter such an evil, that the prospect has lost its terrors,” said Florence calmly. “ Above all, a soldier’s wife, who is bound to face all manner of perils, must not shrink at the very outset of her career.”

“ True, but as your friends come not within the pale of that bond, you must allow them to entertain sundry misgivings in your behalf. I shall be truly glad to hear of your having joined Mr. Travers’s regiment, for though a tyrannical

commandant is an unpleasant kind of animal to deal with, he becomes absolutely amiable in comparison with the possibility of an experience of the tender mercies of a royal tiger."

Florence was silent, and the pause was at length broken by her companion, whose countenance resumed its expression of mingled melancholy and bitterness.

"And yet, even in the jungle, *I* shall envy you!—Envy *me*!—for my gilded roof!—my painted sepulchre! Pity me, sometimes, Florence, when you are most blessed in loving and being loved;—imagine, if you can, the anguish of a hopeless affection,—that has become, by my own will, criminal! Be grateful for your own happier lot,—your own more regulated temper,—and believe, that separation from every friend you have on earth, is a cheap price to pay for the companionship of a husband who possesses the warmest affection your heart has to bestow!"

And when Florence hereafter dwelt on this conversation, she *was* grateful.

Mr. Norman, having effected all his arrangements for returning to Europe, decided on quitting the Residency at the same time as Mr. Travers and his young wife commenced their long journey. The route of the two parties lying, for the first three hundred miles, in the same direction, the *ci-devant* Resident proposed that they should travel in company,—a proposition thankfully accepted by Travers, who rather shrank from the prospect of a solitary journey through the dense jungle they must necessarily pass. The moon was in her early crescent, and they decided on sending their tents and camp-equipage forwards forty miles, and travelling that distance by means of relays of bearers, in one run, as it is called, during the first night, commencing their journey a little before sun-set. The weather was favourable, the cold season having set in, and all the moisture and malaria succeeding the monsoon having passed away. Everything was propitious to the travellers, and the agony of parting with their child was soothed to the

parents unwillingly left behind, by the conviction that she would have every comfort possible to a traveller in India, and that she was entrusted to a guardian to whom she was dearer than life.

CHAPTER XIV.

——“ My dearest mother commands me to keep a journal, and surely *now*, if never yet, her slightest wish should be obeyed. I remembered her injunction during every hour of my first week's journey, but I had no heart to write,—to talk. I could but think on all I had left, and listen to the consoling voice of my husband. Notwithstanding the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Norman, my selfishness would have preferred being alone with Travers. I am now, however, sensible of the advantage of being compelled to exertion, and endeavour to preserve that composure which, I know, my mother would desire me to evince. To be sure, now and then my voice *will* tremble, and my eyes become dim, but the pang passes away, and a smile from

Travers, whose eye seems to see into my very heart, rewards my efforts at self-command.

“We are now getting into the very thickest part of the jungle. To my apprehension there is something almost sublime in the untracked forests which lie on each side of us. Occasionally we reach a cultivated tract, embosomed in hills covered with impenetrable masses of lofty trees, the haunt of predatory animals, but my admiration of the picturesque site of the village inhabited by the cultivators, is checked by the assurance of Travers, that the very hills and forests which constitute the sublimity of the scene, send forth incessant exhalations, whose deadly influence is continually acting on the unfortunate occupants of the soil. Even travellers, he says, cannot travel through it with impunity at certain seasons of the year,—at the termination of the monsoon, for instance, and during the interval between ‘the early and the latter rains.’

“I am very anxious to walk through a Hindoo village,—a pleasure Travers promises me as soon as we have quitted the jungle, and are

once again in the open country. Mrs. Norman laughs at my indulging such a wish. She says, the natives will be quite startled at the sight of a feringhee-beebe walking amongst them. She assures me no English lady of her acquaintance has ever ventured on such an undertaking, and she rallies Travers on his quiet acquiescence in my extraordinary whim. Although I am grateful to her for her unvarying kindness, I do not respect her judgment sufficiently to relinquish a design which promises to gratify a very natural curiosity. Nor do I think Mrs. Norman does our countrywomen justice, when she ascribes to them universally such an apathy as far as regards the extraordinary people amongst whom they live. If I err, my mother will set me right.

“The monotony of a journey through a jungle scarcely affords matter for an attempt at a diary. We enter our palanquins at four o'clock in the morning, and travelling fourteen or sixteen miles,—seven or eight coss,—arrive at our new encampment by eight. Our own supplies are abundant as far as they are portable, but the

forest is so scantily inhabited, that we are occasionally taught the value of milk and fresh eggs, by our inability to procure them. As we advance further, the water becomes thick and dirty; once or twice, bad as it was, we were compelled to carry a quantity with us, as we were informed there would probably be a total deficiency for the next fifteen coss. A Hindoo, I find, can endure any privation more patiently than the want of water. Our people have grumbled at no difficulty of road,—but *this* is an affliction which excites some murmurs. Travers tells me, that it is not uncommon for the followers to desert their employer under such circumstances, especially if he have been imprudent enough to make a large advance of wages. Nothing of the kind has yet occurred to us,—an exemption from a common evil, for which we are probably indebted to being the companions of a *burrah saib* of Mr. Norman's dignity.

“ We have been detained during a week in this encampment by the illness of Mrs. Norman. Our companion, Doctor K——, says *in con-*

fidence, that her indisposition is but a slight fever, which needs not prevent our progress, but which her fears magnify into a dangerous malady. Travers ventured a hint at our proceeding alone, but was silenced by Mrs. Norman's earnest entreaties, that we 'would not desert her when she so much needed the comfort of having her friends about her.' Mr. Norman assured us, that his representations at headquarters would secure Travers from any unpleasant consequences in a military point of view, and, in effect, here we are. Our position fortunately is as favourable as possible. We have left the jungle behind us, and are encamped on a plain in the vicinity of a populous village, which possesses the additional distinction of having once been selected as a proper site for the erection of a palace for the prince of the country, which, though now deserted, still retains traces of its former glory.

"This is the loveliest of the seasons, in this part of the Indian peninsula. A month since, and here the heavy monsoon rains were deluging the world; now the only trace of their

having darkened the glory of the atmosphere is to be discerned in the luxuriant verdure that carpets the earth, the thick foliage of the trees, and the gorgeous hues of the flowers. The plain, boundless as it appears, presents an aspect of bright green, on which the eye may repose and refresh itself after it has been dazzled by the clear azure of the sky, or by the sparkling ripples of the tank on our left, now glittering in the last ray of the sun. Sometimes the monotony is broken by a patch of cultivated ground, producing chollum or other grain, in the midst of which, on a shed elevated by poles, just of size to contain a human being, lies the guardian of the field, whose cries warn off the winged depredators that would otherwise defraud man of the fruit of his labour.

“Mrs. Norman having sunk into a gentle slumber, Travers and I set forth for the indulgence of the luxury of an evening ramble. My desire of walking through an Indian village could never be gratified under more favourable auspices, and we resolved to refresh both our bodies and minds by a spectacle of a

kind to me so novel. The sun was just resting on the brow of a peak, the loftiest of the whole range of hills that bound our horizon on the westward. A lofty and ponderous pagoda crowned it, its snowy walls now dyed with a blush-like crimson, and assuming a more airy and picturesque character in the mellow light. The cloudless sky seemed perfectly transparent, and the whole world looked glad beneath its gorgeous canopy of rich crimson, gold colour, and azure. The clear tank, lying beneath its green and tree-crowned bund, reflected back a rainbow of bright hues, as it rippled in the cool and brisk breeze. The moon was already heralded by a line of light on the opposite horizon, and we set forth before she had commenced her queen-like progress towards the mid-heavens.

“Through a wilderness of weeds, rendered practicable by a narrow footpath, we proceeded towards the village shaded so beautifully by luxuriant topes of mangoes. Midway we passed a small pagoda, not larger than an English summer-house, to which we were at-

tracted by hearing the loud and wailing prayer of a byragee. There he lay, prostrate before his idol, but quite conscious of our proximity, as was evident from his furtive glances and heightened voice. Just as we were turning away, he arose, and standing within the arch that formed the entrance, asked alms,—a vain supplication to us, who know that amongst the many pestilences which assail this land, none exceeds the moral plague of fanaticism. Depraved, idle, sensual,—vagabonds over the face of the country,—by choice not necessity, Travers says,—these wandering priests, if I may call them so,—gain their existence from the credulous by exaggerating the effect of their blessings, or extort it from the timid by pouring forth their loud and terrific curses. The venal instruments of crime, they emulate the readiness of the Italian assassin in ministering to the revenge of those who have gold to proffer for their hire, and, as panders to every baser passion that degrades human nature, they are indeed ‘the pestilence that walketh abroad at noon-day.’

“ We entered the village, and, like so many of the dreams of life, we found it owed the beauty which we admired to its distance. Our senses were first assailed by the malaria arising from an unwholesome-looking tank of stagnant water, just beyond which, on the right, was a plot of ground planted with tobacco, and to the left, on an elevation, a bowrie* surrounded with women, recalling to us the thousand associations which carry us back into the patriarchal ages. These women, in their oriental attire,—as graceful a drapery as can be conceived,—bearing on their heads the most picturesque vases filled with water, walked along beneath their heavy burden, with an erect and even elegant gait ; indeed, I think this ‘ beauty of motion ’ appears to be the principal attraction of Hindoo women. The very young, one must sometimes allow to be pretty, with eyes of that deep, soft, velvet-like black, peculiar to the east ; but the period of youth lasts with them but a short time, and at thirty, can there be a more revolting or dis-

* A well.

gusting spectacle than a female of this country belonging to the very lowest class?—Filthy, haggard, shrivelled,—their lips and teeth stained with the betel they constantly chew,—enduring an existence neither refreshed by memory nor hallowed by hope,—they seem living illustrations of the degradation in which human nature may be prostrated.

“ We were soon in one of the streets of the village, and considering the filth collected on all sides, who can wonder that disease so often ravages this country? The street might possibly admit of four persons walking a-breast, but for the channel of stagnant water which intersected it, and the frequent mounds composed of the refuse thrown out of their houses by the inhabitants, and which it behoved the passenger to avoid as carefully as might be. Pigs, the ugliest and dirtiest of their tribe, black and hideous, a caricature of the race known in England, crossed our path in every direction. Pariah dogs were equally numerous, spared by the superstition of the natives, lest they should haply destroy a body

inhabited by the soul of some of their relations in a penal transmigration!—Even in such a case one would think death would be a boon eagerly coveted, for no animal on the earth can be more wretched than these poor houseless wretches, skeletons from famine and disease.

“ In our progress, we passed a hut of superior size, boasting clean white walls, and altogether indicating as much of comfort as can reasonably be expected to characterise the abode of a ryot*. The door was opened, and the interior was occupied by a bevy of eight or ten females sitting on the ground in the eastern manner, surrounding a woman whose cries and lamentations indicated her as the victim of some serious domestic calamity. We saw one of the sepoy, constituting our guard, standing like ourselves a spectator of the scene, and from him we presently learnt, that the father and the son of the mourner had been on a long journey, and had exceeded, by nearly six months, the expected time of absence. On this day circumstances had been discovered,

* Labourer.

which rendered it too probable that they had become the prey of a band of P'hansegars, or Thugs, who are known to infest the road by which they must have travelled. What a terrific and organized banditti are these ! *

* “ Murderers and robbers composed of all castes ; Mahomedans even were admitted, but the great majority are Hindoos, and amongst these the Brahmins, chiefly of the Bundelcund tribes, are in the greatest numbers, and generally direct the operations of the different bands. Their principal residence is on the banks of the Chumbal and Kuwarry, north-east of Gualior, where they have villages, and usually maintain a connexion, or at least an understanding, with the manager of the district. Their expeditions, which extend as far as Nagpore and the Deckan, have of late years been very frequent in Central India, and more than three hundred of them were in that country in 1819. They have fixed rules, particularly as to the division of booty. Auxiliaries to their enterprises are sought for in all ranks, but the most abandoned of the officers of government of the countries to which they proceed, are those they chiefly desire ; and after having ascertained by letter or verbal report that circumstances are favourable, they usually send as precursors, for the purpose of minute local information, spies disguised as religious mendicants, as tradesmen, or as soldiers looking for service, who connect themselves with the loose characters of the country, and all is prepared for the principal party, which often consists of three or four hundred ; but these are never seen together, though the

“Escaping from the narrow and filthy streets of the village, we entered a plain covered at this season with verdure. This was the market-day, and the traders were gathering up their various wares, preparatory to returning to their native villages. The whole area was lively with noise and occupation. On the outskirts, groups of boys and men were

different bands travel in perfect communication with each other. Some of them have horses, camels, and tents, and are equipped like merchants; others are dressed like soldiers going under a leader to take service; some affect to be Mahomedan beggars and Hindoo Byragees, or holy mendicants; they assume, in short, every disguise. Parties of the boldest and most active are always detached from the main band: these sometimes seek protection from travellers, at others afford it; in either case, the fate of those who join them is the same. The Thugs have, concealed, a long silken cord with a noose, which they throw round the necks of their heedless companions, who are strangled and plundered. Their victims, who are always selected for having property, are, when numerous, or at all on their guard, lulled by every art into confidence. They are invited to feasts where their food is mixed with poisonous or soporific drugs, through the effects of which they fall an easy prey to these murderers and robbers, the extraordinary success of whose atrocities can only be accounted for by the condition of the countries in which they take place.”—*Sir John Malcolm.*

scattered, engaged in playing different games of chance, and from the visible childhood of some of the parties, one must conclude, that gambling is the first acquirement of the infant intellect. There they sat, absorbed in the interest of the game, unmindful of the traffic around them, and regardless of the vicinity of foreigners, whose white faces must have been to them a very novel spectacle. It was an amusing scene,—that Indian market, with its gaily apparelled male and female traders, and their oriental merchandise. Some of the very young women were pretty, *malgré* their dark hue, disfigured too with nose-jewels, and their foreheads stained with the mark of caste. As our party approached, these eastern grisettes with a most coquettish air, placed their hands upon their mouths, the oriental sign of modesty, whilst the laughing eyes that glanced so brightly above, invited the notice this gesture seemed to deprecate. We heard their audible remarks on the foreigners, which were not precisely of a nature to confirm the favourable impression made by their exterior.

Surely in no other habitable part of the globe is our sex sunk into so degraded a prostration of intellect and morals. Here women have the ignorance of the savage, without his redeeming virtues,—the vices of civilization, without its refinement.

“ Quitting the throng of buyers and sellers we proceeded under the wall, which forms the outer fortification of the deserted palace. Entering the strangely ornamented portal, and passing through a court-yard, we found ourselves in the gardens, and inhaling the rich breath of the orange, lime, and citron trees,—walking beneath the shade of the broad-leaved plantains, and gazing on a rainbow of rich flowers. The palace was an insignificant building of brick, covered with chunam,—the durbar, as usual, occupying nearly the whole of the basement story, wooden pillars, united by small painted arches, and carved in various devices, supporting its open front. A flight of narrow stairs conducted us to the women’s apartments,—consisting of a number of small, cell-like chambers, that promised neither luxury

nor comfort. Neglected as it is, and evidently long since deserted by the sovereign, for whose recreation it was erected, it is still entire ; its air of desolation does not result from crumbling ruins, but from the absence of the means and appliances of life, which testifies that man has ceased to abide within its precinct. As we rambled amongst the rooms of the Zenanah, I could not but reflect how many scenes of humiliation and misery must these walls have witnessed !—How many thousands throughout this wide Indian continent are doomed to groan and wither beneath similar sufferings, which no eye sees, no ear hears, no heart pities, and who, in their darkness, are utterly without that sublime consolation which is derived from the conviction that, oppressed as we may be, ‘ He that is higher than the highest regardeth !’

“ The moon was up high in the heavens, when we quitted the silent and desolate place of Indian royalty, and I confess a strangely mingled feeling of melancholy and gratitude filled my heart ;—gratitude, that being born in a Christian country, I enjoyed the privileges of a

rational and accountable being;—melancholy, that I was so distant from that beloved land, and,—dearest mother,—so far,—so *very* far from you.

——— “ It is many days since we enjoyed our evening’s ramble. Mrs. Norman’s recovery has enabled us to prosecute our journey, and we have been travelling generally twenty miles daily. Yesterday we arrived at the point whence our routes are no longer the same; consequently, we separated from our companions, and with our comparatively small retinue, have made one stage. You know I am not much addicted to indulge in fanciful griefs, but I felt more sad in parting with the Normans than I expected, considering they are not people for whom I have any high esteem. They have, however, been invariably kind to me, and having shared a month’s travelling evils, it was painful to lose them; and then there is always the possibility that we shall meet no more. Travers, however, is my world now; and he deserves that I should never regret the hour which made him so. Was not that a witty

reply of the new-married lady to an acquaintance, who condoled with her on her separation from so many friends,—‘I have exchanged one and twenty shillings for a guinea?’”

The journal of Mrs. Travers contains, from this period, little more than the names of the places through which she passed. After a journey which exceeded three months, she arrived in health and safety at the station of her husband's regiment, where she found a letter from Mrs. Middleton awaiting her, from which the following extracts are made:—

“Knowing so well as you do the taste and habits of our friend, Mrs. Tomkins, you will not be surprised to hear that far greater magnificence is displayed at the Residency than has been witnessed there for some years. Mr. Tomkins's indulgence of his handsome wife is as unbounded as his passion for her. Nothing can be a greater proof than his surrendering all those quiet enjoyments which are known to be essential to his happiness, and enduring the

constant crowd of visitors with which his house is filled. If Harriet were generous, she would make some sacrifices to his inclinations ; but she has unfortunately been accustomed to think that even circumstances are to bend to her. Severely as I have felt our separation, I cannot regret that you are removed from the neighbourhood of Harriet. Former intimacy would have justified her in making large demands on your time, and it would have been ungracious always to have resisted her encroachments. I do not think her manners have improved since her marriage. She likes to be surrounded by admirers, and encourages the general homage which the union of high position, beauty, and accomplishments, would attract anywhere, and, in this country, in a degree unparalleled. If her smiles were extended to all in an equal degree, this might be passed over as the error of a very young woman, intoxicated with the universal adulation she receives. But, unfortunately, Harriet evinces daily a partiality for Captain Seymour's society, which, to say the least of it, oversteps the boundaries of discre-

tion. Previously to her marriage, I thought I discerned a feeling for him incompatible with her engagement to Mr. Tomkins, but as it was never very glaring, I fancied it was no more than the coquetry in which she commonly indulged. I fear, however, that my suspicions were correct, and that, if Captain Seymour had evinced a reciprocal partiality, she would, after a struggle perhaps, have resigned, in his favour, all her ambitious views.

“ Captain Seymour is a very agreeable man, —possessing, in no common degree, those showy qualities likely to occupy the imagination of one who loves the glitter of this world so much as Harriet. I can imagine nothing more injurious to her peace,—more fatal, ultimately, to her respectability,—than her intimacy with such a person. Her own self-reliance is materially against her; for she believes she shall always have it in her power to say, ‘Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.’ In common with diffident people in general, Mr. Tomkins is likely to be exceedingly jealous. Doubtful of his own powers of securing affec-

tion, he will naturally examine closely the actions of his wife. If his experience of women had been one degree greater, I am persuaded that Harriet would never have been the woman to whose keeping he would have entrusted his happiness. He would not have attributed her indifference to the modesty of her sex, nor have called her evident coldness, female delicacy. Should his jealousy be once roused, I fear the results would be alarming. Calm people once excited, are tenfold more terrible than your irascible beings who expend all their fire on trifles. And as there are, unfortunately, reports very injurious to Harriet in circulation, it is to be apprehended that they may at length reach *his* ear.

“ Mrs. Tomkins has, by some of her accustomed sarcasms, offended Major Bing, a person who is not the less dangerous, in a community like this, because he is contemptible. A liar by privilege, he has no character to lose, consequently he is not restrained in the circulation of the most malicious scandal by the fear of the world’s opinion. And although his authority

may generally invalidate any current report, still the envious willingly admit the belief that there may, in a case of this kind, be some slight foundation for the venomous whisper,—a belief strengthened by their own subsequent observation. Being so sarcastic, and restraining her wit by no prudent considerations, Harriet should be more than ordinarily circumspect in her conduct, instead of setting at defiance the remarks equally of the envious and the sensible, by indulging in the greatest possible latitude that can be allowed to a married woman.

“ Poor Mrs. Huggins, whom you disliked with a bitterness which seemed hardly natural to your temper, is now an object of pity to all. Her husband was one of those unfortunate officers who believe, that military subordination can never be preserved without tyranny. The men were consequently kept always on hard duty, from which exemption was never allowed except on great emergencies. A havildar* had been refused leave, some few

* A rank in a native regiment corresponding to sergeant.

weeks since ; the man solicited it, it appears, that he might attend a sick child, who subsequently died, and whose death has ever since affected him with the deepest melancholy. A fortnight since the regiment was ordered out to ball practice, when the unhappy man took too sure an aim at his colonel and shot him dead on the spot *. The excitement throughout the cantonment you may imagine, but the grief of Mrs. Huggins was violent beyond description. It is said that, notwithstanding her extraordinary and authoritative manner, she, in reality, loved her husband sincerely, and his death has inflicted a blow from which she will not speedily recover. She excludes herself from all society, and preparations are making for her immediate departure with a view of proceeding to Calcutta, where, it is said, her nearest relative, an Armenian merchant, resides. Mrs. Roland, report affirms, has declined her *ci-devant* patroness's invitation to accompany

* An occurrence, unfortunately, not without abundant precedent in India.

her, and finding from the untoward event of Colonel Huggins's death all her prospects materially clouded, and her actual comforts considerably abridged, she has condescended to violate all her resolutions and vows to the prejudice of subalternship, in favour of Lieutenant Mac Whalley. On the probable happiness to result from such an union it would be idle to speculate, but considering the terms of hostility on which the parties were living at the time of Colonel Huggins's death, the arrangements have been completed with even more than Indian expedition in matrimonial matters, and remembering the melancholy event of which this is the consequence, one can hardly wonder at the indignation prevalent through the cantonment, on the want of feeling it indicates. Hospitality was the redeeming virtue of Colonel Huggins, and the highest disrespect to his memory is evinced by those who were its most frequent partakers.

“I must not forget that Harriet offered to Mrs. Huggins all the assistance in her power,

by proffering the loan of the Resident's elephant and camels to assist her on her journey ; a kindness, however, which was refused with the characteristic rudeness of the unfortunate widow."

CHAPTER XV.

ONCE established in her own house, Florence began to find that there were advantages attached to being with the regiment to which her husband belonged, and in which he was so sincerely beloved, that were hardly to be found elsewhere.

It was proposed, that her arrival should be celebrated by a ball, as was the custom of the corps when an officer rejoined with his bride. But Florence, with the good sense, the prominent anxiety for her husband's comfort, which characterised her, declined the proffered homage. The first morning-call she received from the commandant, made it evident to her that the absence of Travers had not by any means diminished the jealousy with which Co-

lonel Ormond regarded his influence in the regiment, a jealousy which, on the first occasion, might again break forth in some act of oppression to which the quick feelings of Travers were not likely to submit patiently, and the consequences of which might be fatal to his professional career. She deemed it wiser, therefore, to decline a compliment which prejudice might misinterpret, and Travers, too sensible to value the beauty, the graces, the attractions of his wife, only in proportion to the admiration they excited, acquiesced in the propriety of a resolution which exhibited so strikingly her attachment to himself.

Besides Mrs. Travers, there were three or four ladies in the regiment, all of them rather above the average standard of women in India. From these she experienced all those acts of kindness which make one value an existence which all around seem inclined to render happy. In the cantonment, which consisted of three or four corps, she found quite sufficient society to supply her with such recreation as she desired. Happily, there were many

highly cultivated amongst its members, and Florence acknowledged with gratitude, that she could not have been more pleasantly situated.

The first shade upon the brightness of her married life was the illness of her husband—the intermittent fever of the country. That rare thing in India,—a skilful medical officer,—being fortunately attached to the —th cavalry, Travers received all due attention, and his complaint being properly treated, aided by his own excellent constitution, he was convalescent, and then ordered to reside on the coast for two months, in order to the complete re-establishment of his health and strength.

A medical certificate has the force of an irresistible mandate, and notwithstanding the obstructions Colonel Ormond would willingly have thrown in the way, Travers found himself, at length, comfortably settled in a bungalow, the compound of which extended to the seashore.

Although, during this interval, Florence lived in perfect seclusion, she acknowledged it to be

as delightful a period as any of her whole existence. Her husband daily regained health and strength, and she had leisure to enjoy all the beauty of as lovely a spot as adorns the eastern coast of India. A bold and mountainous outline of coast was visible as far as the eye could extend, washed by a surf only less dangerous and picturesque than that of Madras. Numerous vessels daily skirted the horizon, bound to their several destinations, affording that animation essential to the perfection of a sea-view. And then her evening rides along the sea-beach,—were they ever to be forgotten; even in after days, when she would be a resident in happy England? The deep blue sea beneath the just paler sky,—and the snow-white spray of the breakers, as they tossed their feathery summits on the rocks?—or the bright full moon exactly vertical, pouring its rays in one brilliant stream directly into the water, whilst the rippling waves broke up that splendour, and a wide expanse of ocean glittered in the silvery ray? It was no exaggeration to call it so; for, on such nights, each

wave, to the soberest eye, rolls to the shore a sheet of liquid silver, whilst the foam that crests the wave sparkles like a frost-work of snow.

To a mind like hers existence is not the less enjoyed when its course is monotonous. She liked to be able to divide her day into certain portions, each dedicated to particular occupations, secure from the interruption of visitors,—a security which can never occur in a populous cantonment. It seemed as if she had never before had an opportunity of discovering the extent of those high qualities in her husband, which had originally won her untainted heart,—as if never yet had their spirits so mingled together in the communion of thought and feeling. As to Travers, after the daily annoyances to which he was subject, either actually, or, which was as trying, in apprehension, his present abode, cheered by the presence of the woman he adored, was Elysium. His health was rapidly re-established, the tranquillity of his mind aiding the beneficial effects of change of air and scene. The only evil that disturbed

his repose, was one in prospect,—the necessity of returning so soon to his cantonment.

To solicit an extension of leave would have been agreeable to both, but considering the disposition of Colonel Ormond to act harshly, they were unwilling to put a refusal in his power, and returned at the time originally fixed.

The estimation in which Travers had formerly been holden, appeared to have increased since his marriage. The elegance and amiability of his wife, seemed to afford so many additional guarantees for his deserving the distinction with which all ranks of people regarded him. His perfect acquaintance with the language of the natives,—his knowledge of their customs,—the patience with which he listened to their complaints, and, whenever practicable, remedied, to the utmost of his power, their grievances,—the steadiness of his military authority, so far as it extended, never relaxing into weak indulgence, nor, on the other hand, exerted tyrannically,—endeared him to every soldier in his troop. By the officers, his opinion was valued in proportion

to their conviction of his integrity and intellect, and the silent homage of reference to his decision in all matters of a questionable nature, was a testimony to his superiority, that could not but be inexpressibly gratifying to a woman gifted with a mind like that possessed by Florence.

But the consideration enjoyed by Travers was gall and wormwood to Colonel Ormond. He chose to translate it into a tacit reproach of himself,—a perpetual reflection on the line of conduct he had pursued towards an officer so generally beloved. This mode of viewing things did not by any means tend to conciliate his feelings for Travers. Instead of redeeming the irrevocable past by adopting a different system, he pursued a directly opposite course. It would be endless to enumerate the petty artifices by which he contrived to fasten every disagreeable or vexatious duty on Travers, without appearing to deviate from the regularity of the roster. Even the adjutant, whose feelings for Travers were less kind than those

of any other officer, was ashamed of being the involuntary instrument of this miserable species of persecution; even he, inveterate toad-eater as he was, ventured a remonstrance, which was not the less creditable to himself because it entirely failed in its object. As to the other officers, their indignation was at length so strongly excited, that contrary to the wish, the entreaties of Travers, they unanimously resolved to recur to their former method of marking their sense of their commandant's conduct, by steadily refusing all intercourse with him that was not official. This resolution was first evinced by the refusal of their whole body to dine with him at the annual celebration of the battle of Assaye, at which he had been present, and which he never failed to commemorate.

In the height of his indignation he caused an order to be inserted in the orderly book, commanding the attendance of the whole of his officers, at his quarters, at the precise hour mentioned in his cards of invitation. This

being official was of course obeyed, and at the appointed time, adorned with "belt, plume, and sword," they presented themselves before him.

Dinner was immediately announced. "It is a pity, gentlemen," began the Colonel, "that you will not partake of my good cheer without an order to compel your attendance."

"Your order, sir," said Major Z., who had very recently joined, and who was not of a temper to quail before any martinet in the eastern or western hemisphere, "has, in truth, brought me here, and, I suppose, my brother officers also, but what that has to do with partaking of a dinner which we have declined, I confess myself at a loss to understand."

"Sir, I have ordered you here, and the object of my order was, to secure the company of my officers to celebrate an anniversary which ought to be honoured by every man in the army," replied Colonel Ormond, whose passion was rapidly attaining a tremendous height.

"Undoubtedly it ought, but officers as well as other gentlemen will choose their own mode of honouring it," said the Major, who was aware

of his advantage, and was resolved to keep it.

“Meanwhile, sir, we attend your pleasure.”

“My pleasure is, that you all dine with me,” said, or rather stormed the Colonel, in a rage that defies description.

“Do you issue a command of that kind, sir, in your capacity of officer commanding a regiment, or is it an invitation from one gentleman to another?”

“The latter, certainly,—the latter,” exclaimed the Colonel rapidly, who saw the consequence of assenting to the former alternative.

“Then, sir, it has already been answered, and I request permission to withdraw, having an engagement elsewhere.”

“I refuse that permission; I insist, gentlemen, on your sitting down,” said the Colonel absolutely foaming with irrepressible passion.

“Let me advise you, sir, to reflect for a moment,” said the imperturbable Major without moving a muscle. “In compliance with a military order we are here in the expectation of having to discuss military matters. We know our duty as officers too well to refuse obedience

to any official command, but I apprehend, you will find it rather difficult to discover a precedent for compelling officers to eat who are not inclined."

"Sir, this is the most insolent, the most insubordinate, the most unmilitary language, I ever had the misfortune to listen to," said the Colonel. "Sir, an officer of your standing in the service, affords a dangerous example by such contumacy; sir, I shall report the matter to higher authority."

"To the judgment of higher authority I shall be happy to have it submitted, sir, and if by my means the state of the regiment generally should be brought under official notice, I shall consider that I have done an essential good to the army to which I have the honour to belong."

"Do you presume to threaten me, sir?—I will be bearded by no man," said the Colonel in towering anger. "A very little more, sir, and I desire my adjutant to take your sword."

"My sword, sir, is, in that point of view, at your disposal; to be deprived of it in such a

cause, will not, in my estimation, tarnish the blade," said Major Z. proudly and sternly.

Colonel Ormond looked at the speaker, and felt that he had to deal with a man who, in his own person, was not to be despised, and who, by his rank and length of service stood so nearly on an equality with himself, as to render it a delicate matter to venture on placing him under arrest, especially under such circumstances as the present. Collecting himself, therefore, and assuming as much dignity as was compatible with a very mean person, he said, "Retire, gentlemen.—I shall place this transaction under the cognizance of others better qualified to decide on it than I am."

The officers bowed and obeyed.

What might be the nature of the representations of Colonel Ormond to head quarters, it is impossible to ascertain, but those made by Major Z. to his influential friend the Adjutant General of the army, were probably quite as effectual in producing the order emanating from the Commander-in-Chief, for the

assembling of a Court of Inquiry, to ascertain the causes of the dissensions stated to exist in the ——th Regiment of Light Cavalry,—the Members of the Court being named by the same high official.

The result of such an inquiry may be imagined. All the mal-practices of Colonel Ormond were brought to light,—his general tyranny exposed,—and his persecution of Travers individually displayed in all its disgraceful details. It is not a part of Indian policy ever to punish a superior on the representations of an inferior, and it may be considered an act of singular justice, that Colonel Ormond was suspended from all command until the pleasure of the Court of Directors was known. Meanwhile the regiment fell under the charge of Major Z., one of the best officers in the service.

The last year had been so full of difficulty and trial to Florence, that she could hardly comprehend the extent of her happiness when she found her husband honourably relieved from the cloud in which Colonel Ormond had

formerly contrived to shadow him, and that individual, on whom she could never look without a feeling of dread and aversion, removed from the command of the regiment, powerless in future to injure or annoy. None can tell the extent of a wife's sufferings in a climate like India, when she knows the husband of her heart is selected as the object of military persecution, which may too probably result in his utter ruin; few, therefore, can comprehend the lightened heart with which she contemplated the future, or the radiant content which gilded every prospect around her with a hue of happiness.

CHAPTER XVI.

“NOT yet weary of the rôle of a subaltern’s wife, fair Florence?—Still billing and cooing as if the honey-moon had not wasted?—You yet a rose, and Travers yet a bulbul?—Happy and unequalled pair!—These are delights which I may envy, but which nature and circumstances unfit me for enjoying.

“So you have been in terrible difficulties,—have had a commandant who, to say the least of it, deserved to be blown from the mouth of a cannon. We hear, on all sides, wonders of Travers’s good conduct, officer-like, gentleman-like, and so forth. The late inquiry has quite ‘whitened his face,’ as the Persians say. You have your share of eulogium also, though I know I shall not gratify you as much by that

information as by the praises of your caro carissimo. Your humility in not insisting on your claims to precedence can never sufficiently be commended, albeit, to me it is not very intelligible. So you actually shrank into the mere Lieutenant's wife, and dropped that pretty little '*Honourable*,' which so enhances the value of a name! These are sublimities to which I do not aspire, deeming it wisdom to enjoy to the utmost the good gifts which heaven has showered on me. However, as I have already said a thousand and one times, accident never before threw two such complete contrasts into close juxta-position, as you and my too vivacious self.

"As for me, the lights and shadows of one day of my existence so closely resemble the lights and shadows of another, that I marvel much how I contrive to support the wearisome monotony. I fear honest John does not fare the better because his lady finds the hours insipid. Even *he*, poor quiet gentleman, can on occasion, I have discovered, become *almost* sarcastic, and *quite* sullen. Who could have

suspected that that calm exterior covered so much positive disagreeableness? There is no trusting these men;—happy they whose stars decree them independence! Was there any mighty harm in my wishing to convert the banqueting-room into a private theatre? It has such excellent capabilities, it is a pity they should be allowed to remain unemployed. Yet my obstinate man positively refused to allow the requisite alterations, and stormed and ranted in a manner that would have done honour to a pacha of three tails. And Seymour acts so divinely, that the loss of the entertainment I contemplated, is really a serious evil. ‘On his head be it!’

“Kirkpore is tenfold duller than ever. Mrs. Huggins, if neither elegant nor agreeable, was at least amusing. It was something to hear of the atrocities of which she was guilty. Her followers too are dispersed. Major Bing has paid the penalty of habitual falsehood. Tired, I suppose, of wasting his brilliant fancy on the *tutti quanti*, he allowed it to take a higher flight, and ventured to deal out certain facts

respecting a certain dignitary. To avoid the Court-martial with which he was threatened in consequence, he has withdrawn to the non-effective establishment, and is no longer amongst us. The fate of poor Simms has been more tragic. He went with Captain Summers and a large party in pursuit of a tiger, which was said to infest the jungle between this and Roomgaum. They borrowed three or four elephants for the occasion, and left the cantonment in expectation of a splendid hunt. Bushes, however, were beaten in vain for several hours, and the party, thoroughly tired, returned to their tents. It seems, that, after having dined, Simms and another, each with a rifle in his hand, wandered out with no settled purpose, merely in the chance of a stray shot at some bird. Unfortunately they ventured on a sugar plantation, but had scarcely passed its extremity, when the terrible animal showed himself. In an instant,—without a moment's interval,—before a trigger could be pulled, Simms was in his tremendous grasp. His companion, terrified out of all presence of

mind, fired a random shot, which had no other effect than to increase the fury of the monster. In a word, poor Simms was killed,—the victim of a rashness which everybody condemns, as people are apt to reprobate every action that is unfortunate in its event. Can you imagine, a more awful—a more cruel—death? All the world agree in pronouncing tiger-hunting one of the finest sports in the world, but how frequently are we compelled almost to witness the appalling consequences which arise from it!

“This melancholy event did not, however, disturb the current of our amusements. It seems to be universally agreed, that, in a country affording daily examples of ‘moving accidents by flood or field,’ if people were to bewail each separate calamity, life would be but a scene of perpetual mourning. The races took place last week as appointed,—that is, at the barbarous hour of six in the morning. At first, I declared it impossible to be present, valuable as such an amusement was at Kirkpore. But my objections were overruled by the fact, that

Seymour had a horse to run, on whose head many heavy bets were depending, and my curiosity to witness the excitement likely to prevail completely vanquished my indolence. Would you believe, that this simple circumstance threw honest John into a tempest of rage, which was succeeded by a fit of the sullens which has not yet entirely disappeared?—He pretends to complain, that I resisted all *his* entreaties, and refused to attend these abominable races on any terms, but as soon as I heard Seymour had a horse to run,—hey, presto!—my resolutions vanish instantly, and are as immoveable in the opposite direction. No sooner did my amiable lord and master perceive that my inclinations had veered to this point of the compass, than he seemed bent on blowing them back again,—an achievement, I fear, rather beyond his powers. He threatened—ranted—commanded;—I laughed—sneered—and disobeyed. How very small a man looks after such an assertion of ‘lawful rule and right supremacy,’ when he finds it utterly disregarded!—Nothing is so contempt-

ible as to issue a decree without the power—the authority—to enforce it.

“ Now do not frown, or sigh, or predict all manner of horrors from a little matrimonial fracas of this kind, of which you have no experience. Do not either place implicit confidence in all the representations your excellent mamma may make of my exceeding naughtiness. She does not understand me. Occasionally, she gives me very excellent advice, but it is not applicable to my case, for she does not comprehend my feelings. As to the scandalous rumours which idleness and malice originate and propagate in such a place as this, they excite in me nothing but scorn, and far from allowing them to influence my conduct in the slightest degree, the only effect they could possibly have, would be to induce me to persist in doing the thing which they condemn. Assure yourself I mean no harm. Notwithstanding the censures of the envious, and the jealousy of honest John, my flirtation with Seymour is as innocent as my affection for yourself, though I honestly confess, more

amusing. One requires, in such a climate as this, some excitement to be convinced that one exists ; and I do not feel inclined to sacrifice the few pleasures left me, at the will of a parcel of people whose opinion I do not value at one straw, or at the arbitrary mandate of a husband, I have never professed to love. I can rely on myself to preserve his respectability and my own, and until one or both are injured, he has no right to complain. I do not hope for your acquiescence in a doctrine like this ; you take your own path, and I mine, but I suppose we have both the same goal in view—our own happiness, and if we attain it, of what use is it disputing about the means ?

“ There is philosophy for you !—After all, acknowledge that my argument has a rational foundation.

“ Ever yours,

“ HARRIET.”

Florence read this characteristic letter with the deepest grief. Comparing it with the information communicated by Mrs. Middleton,

she feared that Harriet was committing the most fatal error that can be committed by a wife not yet guilty,—outraging public opinion by her open defiance of all the ordinary restrictions of society, and rousing the jealousy of her husband by her almost avowed preference of another man. Florence could not but be anxious for the fate of a being so attractive in person and manner,—whose failings were the result of education, perhaps of example,—and who had been her companion in so many dangers. Her own happier destiny was viewed with feelings of the deepest gratitude, that sentiments so opposite had been constantly impressed on her mind,—that an ambitious alliance had not been exhibited to her as the object to which all her hopes, all her wishes, should tend, and for the attainment of which accomplishments were to be acquired,—personal graces improved and *coveted*. She hoped, that should Harriet be blessed as she herself was,—should she press to her bosom an infant treasure,—for Florence had now been three months a mother,—her heart would awake to

all those delicious yearnings which constitute a parent's felicities, and spread a joy, a charm, even over her anxieties.

Florence, in truth, enjoyed at this period happiness so exquisite, that she shrank from the prospect of change. Once reunited to her parents, she felt as if she could *almost* consider India her home. It seemed as if she had no wish to breathe, but for the health and well-being of her boy, whose progress repaid all her cares. But she had to experience how rapidly the scenery of this fleeting world changes, for now "a change came o'er the spirit of her dream."

The unusual sight of a letter directed by his father's hand, bearing the external indications of mourning, prepared Travers for something extraordinary, but not for an occurrence so utterly unexpected as its contents revealed.

The unjust father was bewailing the loss of his first-born,—of that fondly beloved son, to whose aggrandisement his other sons had been sacrificed,—for whose sake their prospects had been dimmed even in the very outset of their

career. He had not been cut off by any sudden blow ;—it appeared that the illness which terminated fatally, had been of that lingering kind, where the inroads of death are so gradual, that the eye and the heart refuse to allow that he is approaching. “To the last,” wrote the bereaved father, “I could not believe that he would be taken from me. The physicians distracted me with their cruel apprehensions, but it was pleasant to me to doubt their knowledge, and to recall the thousand instances in which their predictions had been falsified by the fact. But alas, alas !—I lived to close his eyes !—to see him deposited with the by-gone of our ancient line !—He, the vigorous sapling, was struck to the earth, whilst I, the withered, worn-out tree, was left standing as firmly as ever.

“Death is an awful thing, my son, but never so awful as when the old man sees it bearing away the young,—*his own young* ! Where now was all my pride in my heir ? What to him were the riches I had heaped up for him, —the honours those riches were to adorn ? I

could give him a costly coffin, and a marble sepulchre,—and that was his whole inheritance. A small spot of my broad lands,—a gloomy house for the heir of palaces !

“The past is gone, and I shall shortly be as the past. *My* future must necessarily be confined to a span, and my eyes long to behold the successor of my boy. Come, therefore, to your desolate father, my neglected son, and gladden him with the sight of you before he is called to rejoin your brother. Bring the wife you have chosen. A father’s blessing awaits her. Ambition might have craved a higher alliance for you, but mine sleeps in your brother’s grave. Long before your marriage had become so important an event, I had ascertained that the family to which you have allied yourself, has nothing connected with it for which the proud might blush ;—that if not noble, it is at least respectable ; if not wealthy, honourable. Let me live to see you with an heir, and I shall go down to my grave in peace.

“Let us meet quickly, my son, but let us not recur to the irretrievable past. Forgive

your father's former unkindness, and, reflecting on its punishment, spare him not only reproach, but resentment. Let us meet as beseems an aged parent and his child. Ours shall be a family re-union. We will summon your younger brothers to a renewal of ties which ought never to have been disregarded, and in their case also, I will prove, that I have benefited by the terrible lesson which has been enforced on me.

“Assure your wife, that a second father's welcome awaits her; come to me, both of you, in peace.”

What a vast,—what an incomprehensible change of circumstances! Florence could hardly bring herself to believe in the reality of her sudden,—her unexpected elevation. Such a contingency had never been within the scope of her wildest contemplations. She had not even regarded the remote possibility, that the elder brother of her husband might die unmarried, or childless, and leave his wealth and honours to her children. All her views—all her hopes had been limited by Travers's ad-

vancement in his professional career, and she had compelled herself to contemplate India as her certain place of abode for many, many years to come. Since the birth of her child, she had even shrunk before the anticipation of that time when he must necessarily be separated from her care, and in England reap those constitutional and mental advantages, which are not to be obtained in the east. And now, she beheld in that beloved child the certain heir of ancient titles, of a lordly inheritance, which no caprice of man could alienate from him, of which only the inexorable hand of death could deprive him. And she was about to return to her native land, under a character so far above any previous expectation, that she even trembled at the unexpected elevation, lest such a trial of prosperity should not be borne meekly. Affliction and persecution she had endured with dignity; it was now her part to receive the goods of rank and fortune, with that due regard to their real value, which should keep her mind still in humble dependence on the Great Being, and impress on

her the constant question, "what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?"—the axe laid at the root of all pride.

Travers had known so little of his brother since their years of childhood, that an exhibition of violent grief would have been mere affectation. The knowledge that, for the sake of this elder brother, he was to be banished from his native land, and carve his own way to fortune, had been one of the earliest impressions made on his mind, and no affinity can secure attachment to an object always associated with suffering and privation. It requires much to destroy the strongest of our instincts—the filial, and Travers received the assurance of his father's affection with tenderness and gratitude. The prospect of immediately quitting a country, the fatal climate of which was gradually undermining his constitution, was in itself delightful,—but to return to his own, to occupy there a station amongst the highest, to place the wife of his bosom in such a situation, as would afford an ample field for the exhibition of all her graces—all

her loveliness, imparted a sensation of bliss which amounted to ecstasy.

His first care was to resign his commission immediately, that his juniors might benefit as early as possible by his resignation. Florence, with correspondent alacrity, communicated to her parents the sudden and extraordinary change in her prospects. She entreated her father to decide on accompanying herself and her husband to England. She represented, that the causes which had actuated him to a protracted residence in India, no longer existed. Her situation was now such, that she could offer to her sisters the most desirable introduction in her native land, and Travers desired her to add, that if they continued unmarried, a home and a protector would always be theirs. She urged on him how desirable it was, that he and her mother, now in the autumn of life, should quit a climate so ungenial, and find in their own country renovated health and strength; and she enforced all her arguments by the assurance, that her own happiness could never be complete, whilst

such "a weary world of waters" separated her from parents so much and so deservedly beloved.

The reply of Colonel Middleton was characteristic. He rejoiced in the improved fortunes of his child; he appreciated the affectionate spirit which had dictated her letter; he was grateful to her husband for those kind assurances which, he was convinced, were made in all sincerity. He was assured, however, that the reason of his daughter would acknowledge the prudence and consistency of the principles which regulated her mother and himself. It had cost them a hard struggle to relinquish the hope of joining her and Travers immediately, but having ascertained what was the proper course for them to pursue, they had not hesitated to adopt it. In three years, Colonel Middleton would, according to the average run of the service, be so near the *

* I have inquired of many officers, to learn precisely in what this fund originates, without being able to obtain any explanation so clear as to bear repeating. From it, as many of the senior officers of the army as there are regiments

off-reckonings, that he would have the prospect of retiring on a comfortable independence, which would allow him to make such a provision for his other children, as to render the protection of his son-in-law, though most valuable and desirable, not a matter of necessity. He and Mrs. Middleton, therefore, had decided on advising Florence to accompany her husband on board as soon as the necessary arrangements could be completed, and to submit with patience and resignation, as her parents endeavoured to do, to the necessity of a separation which, after all, would not be very protracted, and would be greatly alleviated to both parties, by the consideration of the favourable change in the situation of Florence which had caused it.

Florence *did* acquiesce in the prudence—the reason of this decision;—and if this acquiescence cost her a few regrets, at least it was not accompanied by a single murmur. Every requisite preparation was rapidly completed, and they were enabled to derive an addition to their retiring pay of £400 or £500 per annum.

pleted, and in less than three months she, with her husband and children, were on board a large and celebrated ship, abounding in excellent accommodations, and known as a rapid sailer,—bound for England.

CHAPTER XVII.

To say that Mrs. Tomkins did not envy the unexpected elevation of Florence, would describe her as possessing a dignity of character to which she had no claim. To know that she herself was merely presiding over the mock court of a British Resident in India, whilst her *ci-devant* companion was absolutely in the ranks of the peeresses of England, was sufficiently mortifying ; but she had the additional pain of feeling, that Florence had not attained her present position by a single sacrifice of principle or even sentiment. In the straightforward integrity which had marked her career, she had become attached to a man whose actual rank was mere subalternship, and who had no earthly prospect in any other quarter

than his military career. Her father's consent dignifying such an union, she could not be said to act imprudently, and Travers, with his small independency, was, in a worldly point of view, a better match than officers of his grade generally, and to his wife and children, in common to all others belonging to the Company's service, a competent provision was secured. Still, in this marriage, what an immense interval separated her from the brilliant position of the wife of a Resident! In their relative positions, Harriet's notice of her friend could with propriety assume an air of patronage, and she had every prospect of returning in a few years to England, with a fortune that would place her at once on a desirable footing in society. She had often anticipated the period, when, the Indian career of both having terminated, she would be occupying the *manor-house*, and Florence some snug little cottage in its vicinity, and she had imagined the disinterested condescension with which she should take her friend by the hand, and introduce her to such society as otherwise would not probably be

within her reach. And now, by the death of this unfortunate elder brother,—how the relative positions of the two had been reversed!

Then came the never-forgotten thought of the sacrifice at which Harriet herself had purchased the paltry grandeur of her lot. She had bartered for it all the feelings which generally constitute the existence of woman. She was the wife of a man whose character, estimable as it might appear to others, was to her apprehension contemptible from its defects,—defects which, being those of manner, were continually obtruding themselves on her notice. The extent of his really profound acquirements she had not the power of appreciating, for she had not intellect enough to discover them, and he had too much constitutional diffidence to obtrude them on the notice of those who did not take the trouble to seek for them. But that she undervalued her husband was not the least grievous circumstance of her unhappy condition. She cherished for one man a preference, of which she was conscious, even when, with false vows, she pledged herself at the

altar to another. Conscious of the state of her feelings, she had not resolution or self-denial enough to abstain from the society of that dangerous man, but permitted him to pay those attentions which were too gratifying to the feelings she indulged for him, and which could not escape the notice or the censure of the most charitable of those who witnessed them.

The most important events of life may often be traced to the least dignified source. The influence acquired occasionally by native servants over their European masters, is hardly credible by those who have not witnessed the fact, and inexplicable even to those actually aware of its existence. Perfectly conversant with the various languages of the country,—thoroughly acquainted with the laws and customs of the people,—no man in the two services was better calculated to occupy the situation of Resident at the court of an Indian prince, than Mr. Tomkins. Respected by the higher class of natives for the acquirements which were so beneficial to their own interests, he was beloved by the lower for his considerate

attention to their feelings and requirements. The gratitude of these people is very rarely, however, strong enough to subdue their selfishness. Accustomed to control the household of his master, and to reap from that superintendence the advantages it naturally offered, Mahommed Sultaun, who had for years been Mr. Tomkins's dubashee*, could not brook the marriage of his master,—an event which threatened so materially to contract the sphere of his speculations. Mrs. Tomkins, therefore, was the object of his secret animosity, and he criticised her actions with the vigilance of a person bent on discerning something which he might render subservient to his own advantage.

What was the result of his observations, may be tolerably well ascertained by a conversation he had with his master, whilst the latter was engaged in the operations of the toilette.

Mahommed was particularly anxious to expedite the motions of the dressing-boy, whose awkwardness he severely blamed, and whom at length he contrived to dismiss on the errand of

* Butler—head-servant.

re-cleaning his master's shoes, which, in their present state, Mahommed declared, he "should have too much shame in seeing the Resident-sahib wear."

As soon as he had fairly quitted the verandah, which Mahommed was careful to observe he actually *did* quit, he commenced his plan of "sapping and mining."

"People in cantonment make too much to-mashee* about races," he began. "What for have races?—Horses more good for gentlemans ride proper."

"English gentlemen think it a fine amusement, it is their country custom," said Mr. Tomkins, with his usual condescension to his favourite domestic.

"I think not good custom. Hurt horse very much,—sometimes hurt gentlemans too; sometimes little hurt *bebe sahibs*, I think."

"Why, I do not see how that can well happen, Mahommed," returned his master, with a smile. "The ladies do not ride, you know,

* Festival—noise.

and they are in a very safe place. It would be a strong horse, indeed, that would be able to kick down the race-stand."

"Master laugh at me, I see very plain," said Mahommed. "He think I too much fool-man, —too much ass grandfather. Suppose master see all I see, master think races too much bad thing too, same way I think."

"Well, and what wonderful thing should I have seen, Mahommed?" asked Mr. Tomkins, greatly amused with the dignified displeasure of the dubashee.

"Not my business," said the astute Mussulmaun with assumed backwardness. "Suppose I make mischief, all people point finger at me, say I bad man—I lie-man. Hindoo people all lie; gentlemen not lie; lady not lie. Only poor man, poor dubashee, he lie plenty. Master angry too."

"What is this you are saying?" asked Mr. Tomkins, seeing plainly through the pretence of his servant's feigned unwillingness, and being convinced that he had some information

to give which *he* believed important, but which would be elicited probably only by his own command. "Why should I be angry,—why should people point the finger,—why should they call you *jût wallah**,—if you have spoken but the truth?—What thing is this you are saying, Mahommed?"

"Why for I blacken my face?—S'pose people make master eat plenty dirt, that not my business,—I poor man,—what can I say?"

"But you have already said so much, Mahommed, that it will be better for you to say all. You have some fine tale to relate, I dare say, and the sooner we have it, the sooner it will be done with."

"What can I do?—Master very good master. Master my father, my mother, all good. I not like people laugh for master. I think"—and he lowered his voice,—“I very much 'fraid mistress not good—*leetle* bad,—people say."

Mr. Tomkins started as if a serpent had bitten him. The blood left his face, and rushed

* Liar.

to his heart to defend the citadel, exposing his pale cheek to the observant eye of the Hindoo. The suspicions which he himself had scarcely dared to harbour in the secrecy of his own thoughts, were already, he found, the common property of his servant, and to how many other minds must they have reached before they descended to his!—As with many other highly-gifted people, Mr. Tomkins's extreme diffidence was allied to great pride, and to find that suspicion of *his* wife was entertained by *any*, and worse than all, by such as the being before him, was a conviction so bitter, that he felt as if it were hardly possible to live under it.

The Hindoo perceived that his arrow had taken full effect. “I too much sorry,” he said, “to make master angry with mistress, but if all people talk bad, what can I say?—what can I do? I not good man, s’pose I not tell master.”

“I do not understand what you are saying, Mahommed,” returned Mr. Tomkins, aiming at composure. “If you have anything to tell,

out with it, man, I am in a hurry to go to breakfast."

"S'pose I tell, then master tell mistress, then mistress persuade master I tell too much lies. I poor man; master my very good friend; mistress no like me too much,—think I not like Seymour sahib."

Again Mr. Tomkins recoiled as from the sting of the scorpion. "What has Captain Seymour to do with you, Mahommed?" he asked.

"Nothing, nothing,—he speak very pleasant to me, always,—very good gentleman;—I make salam, then he say 'ah Mahommed, my good fellow!' That all! no other word. He never offer rupee;—ayah got fine new bangles*, I see."

This association between Captain Seymour's rupees, and the bangles of Mrs. Tomkins's ayah, threw additional light on the purpose of the dubashee, and plunged the mind of the unfortunate husband into deeper dismay.

"Well, Mahommed," said he, with assumed

* Bracelets.

composure, "if the purport of all this paish * is to tell me that the ayah has a pair of new bangles, you have made a great mystery of a very small matter. There; hand me a white jacket, and let me be going. Breakfast waits."

"Not wait," said Mahommed eagerly, willing to justify himself from the imputation of trifling. "Ma'am sahib not yet come home. Went out to ride, gun-fire time, with Seymour sahib."

"*Ha!*" exclaimed Mr. Tomkins, and the astute Mahommed knew well the meaning of that interjection.

"Mistress ride very often with Seymour sahib," resumed the Hindoo. "Then all people say, he very good friend to mistress,—not so much master's good friend. People laugh too much,—talk much,—but I poor servant,—I not speak one word. All Europe gentlemen think master too much good, too much great; laugh plenty; nobody says mistress bad."

"Food for laughter to a whole community? The butt—the derision—the scorn of the can-

* Chatter.

tonment!" said Mr. Tomkins, as he smote his forehead with his clenched fists. "And all for what?—for a woman, who ——?—Mahommed, what is it these people say?"

Mahommed, who estimated, with tolerable accuracy, the violence of the storm he had raised, was so terrified as to be glad to answer, with all the rapidity possible,—“Not say much;—only think little better s’pose mistress not ride morning-time so much with Seymour sahib, and Seymour sahib not come ever to Residency.”

Mr. Tomkins, without speaking another syllable, left his dressing-room, and proceeded to the hall, where his lady was presiding at the breakfast table.

She had never looked more lovely. A soft glow was on her cheek, and a subdued radiance in her eye, partly, perhaps, the effect of her morning’s ride, but probably resulting, in a great measure, from the half-whispered converse of her companion, Captain Seymour, who occupied the post at her right hand.

Mr. Tomkins endeavoured to conceal the tempest that raged within, by an exterior as

calm as usual. But notwithstanding his efforts, notwithstanding the measured tone of voice in which he spoke,—not only his wife, but Captain Seymour himself, was sensible that there was “that within that passeth show;” and with the timidity of conscious wrong, both trembled before a man whom, an hour before, each had been amused with ridiculing as one of the weakest and poorest of Heaven’s creatures.

The taciturnity of the master of the house was perhaps hardly greater than usual, but from the operation of other causes it was more sensibly felt. His wife, who thought the breakfast would never terminate, had sought in vain for some plausible excuse for quitting the table. Captain Seymour was equally uncomfortable, and the meal was scarcely over when, pleading the necessity of waiting on the commanding officer of the Force to receive orders, he made his bow and retired.

Mrs. Tomkins rose likewise, preparing to withdraw to her own apartment. But she was arrested by the voice of her husband. There was something in its tones at which her in-

most heart quailed, but with her usual self-possession, affecting a courage she had not, she turned round with an affectation of surprise.

“And what can you possibly have to say to me, tête-a-tête?” she began with an air of levity. “We have an opportunity of saying so many disagreeable things to each other at little odd moments, that it is really a pity to set about it seriously. It spoils one’s morning.”

“Lay aside your trifling; this is not an hour, not an occasion, in which it can be endured,” said Mr. Tomkins, sternly. “Sit down and hear me.”

Overcome by his manner, she obeyed.

“The impression made by your conduct on myself some months since, at the Residency races, you can hardly have forgotten,” he resumed. “What I then foresaw, has happened. Whether that afforded the first pretext for condemnation of you and satire of us both, I have yet to learn. At least it gave a new impulse to both, and I have the anguish of feeling that, by your imprudence, I am an object of ridicule and contempt to the whole society.”

“That is indeed lamentable, considering the component parts of the society,” returned his lady flippantly. “Are you quite sure, that you entirely escaped ridicule and contempt previously to your marriage? If such be your conviction, it is at any rate a comfortable fancy.”

“Peace!” said he, in a voice of command; and his manner made even that selfish and vain heart tremble. “This is no time for levity, nor will I brook it, madam. It boots not now to arraign you for the past, but it is still in my power to control the future. You may have forgotten, or may disregard, all that is due to yourself;—you may deride or defy the opinion of that society in whose sphere your lot is cast,—but I am not idiot enough or philosopher enough to do either. I choose to observe the decorums which civilization enforces on us, and I respect the conventional laws which are my own security. In this respect my wife *must* conform to my opinions, for I *will* be obeyed.”

“Really, sir, this is a style to which I have been so entirely unaccustomed, that I am at a

loss how to reply to it in a suitable manner," said Mrs. Tomkins, affecting a composure which she did not feel. "I have not been tutored to consider command and obedience—the imperative mood and the passive voice—the necessary accidence of the matrimonial intercourse, and I fear I am now rather too old to learn."

"It is a lesson which, nevertheless, will be enforced on you," said Mr. Tomkins, justly indignant. "I have not detained you here for the purpose of waging a war of words, which befits neither my character nor my inclination. You are to listen to my positive desire, that you abstain, in future, from all intercourse with Captain Seymour beyond the ordinary usages of society, and that, even in observing those, you confine yourself to the cold courtesies of ceremony. In *this* respect, my will *must* be submitted to, and if you shrink from obeying it, I shall put non-compliance out of your power."

Harriet's spirit quailed, and her cheek for a

moment became pale. She saw in an instant the dilemma to which she was reduced, but she resolved not to yield without an effort.

“ Captain Seymour! — So this tornado is really nothing but a jealous fit after all!” she said, attempting sportiveness. “ The least horror in my conjectures was, that you had been called to account for some little sally of fancy which I had indulged at the expense of the good and stupid ones of Kirkpore. I began to fear that pistols, shot, and seconds were coming into play, and that my unfortunate *équipées* had been the prime agents in the business. Come agree with me, that my fears exceeded the reality. A little jealousy is not so very tremendous, but a duel with real leaden bullets! I confess, I should have a qualm of conscience in being the cause of one.”

“ Will nothing quench this untimely levity?” said Mr. Tomkins, with a manner half angry, half grieved. “ Have you entirely lost one of the most respectable of our conventional feelings, the desire of a fair reputation amongst

those with whom you live? Do you really count it for nothing to be pointed at by the finger of scorn, — ultimately, perhaps, to be discarded by that very society whose laws you condemn? whose opinion you despise? No rank—no influence—can secure you from the consequences of imputed crime.”

“Crime!” exclaimed Harriet, rejoiced to find a just pretext for anger, in a suspicion so far beyond the actual truth. “Who has the temerity—the presumption—the wickedness—to venture an untruth so diabolical?”

“And if I had but the shadow of a suspicion that you *were* guilty, *dare* you imagine that you and I should have been at this moment under the same roof?” said Mr. Tomkins indignantly, and Harriet, in her secret heart, acknowledged that she had never believed his insignificant person capable of expressing so much dignity. “You see me as your preserver from *possible* evil;—if I appeared as the avenger—great Heaven!” and the agony of his passion rendered him speechless.

“Really, Mr. Tomkins, this combating with

shadows is rather too sublime for my apprehension. If you are Don Quixote enough to take windmills for giants, I am not under the influence of that species of lunacy," said Harriet, who felt her courage revive. "You may act as you please about Captain Seymour, but if you make a point of quarrelling with me for preferring agreeable men to stupid, I advise you to admit none but Calibans, if you would not have our lives a scene of perpetual wrangling."

"I am not to be diverted from my purpose by trifling," said Mr. Tomkins. "It is my firm resolution that Captain Seymour shall visit here no more, but for your sake it would be prudent that the refusal to receive him should come from yourself."

"Never, never!" said Harriet indignantly. "Whatever may be my errors, hypocrisy is not amongst them. Make yourself as ridiculous as you please. Tell Captain Seymour,—publish to the whole world,—that you are jealous. Tell your servants to refuse him admission when he calls; do what you will, but expect not that I

will be your aid-du-camp. Win and wear all the honours of an action so truly dignified and praiseworthy,"—and Harriet flung out of the hall as she spoke.

To resolve and to act were with Mr. Tomkins the same thing. In as short a time as possible, the subjoined note was in the hands of Captain Seymour:—

“DEAR SIR,

“In a community where too much leisure leads people to find occupation by looking into their neighbours' concerns, you will not be surprised to learn that the friendship between yourself and Mrs. Tomkins has given rise to sundry ill-natured reports, of which it is not necessary to say more than that they have exceedingly annoyed and distressed her. You will hardly be astonished, and certainly not displeased, that she should request you, through me, to abstain from future visits at the Residency, except on formal and special occasions.

“To lose your acquaintance entirely would be very unpleasant to both of us, but the pleasure

of preserving it, at the expense of so much scandal, would be too dearly purchased.

“ Yours truly,

“ JOHN TOMKINS.”

“ Now, shall I shoot the fellow through the head, or put a bullet through my own ?” said Captain Seymour, when he had read the chit.

On reflection, however, he did neither. He enclosed it in one from himself to Mrs. Tomkins, which he dispatched by a trusty messenger who was on very good terms with her ayah, ordering him, at the same time, to take every possible means of conveying it safely and secretly to the hands of the lady.

No Mercury could have managed the matter more cleverly. Harriet received it, and read as follows :—

“ MY DEAR MRS. TOMKINS,

“ I have just received the enclosed most extraordinary chit;—that it was written with your cognizance, or is at all the expression of your wishes, with all due deference to Mr. Tomkins

I do not believe. A person of his limited views may probably think it prudent to allow a frivolous and censorious society to regulate his actions, but I hardly think a weakness of this kind at all in keeping with a character like yours, abounding in enlarged and elevated ideas. What was there—what *is* there—for, until I have your commands, *written by yourself*, to consider it so, I cannot bring myself to speak of it as *past*,—in our innocent friendship that ought to have drawn down on us the animadversions of the most illiberal scandal-monger that ever purveyed to the depraved appetite even of an Indian coterie? It is true that I have regarded,—that I ever shall regard you with a devotion such as no other woman could inspire, and I have regretted—how deeply!—how painfully!—that such a treasure of loveliness and excellence should be possessed by a man who has not understanding enough to appreciate it. I have, indeed, bewailed my own unhappy destiny which, when the lists were open to me, made me shrink from seeking to appropriate the good I most

ardently coveted, because I could not endure that you should play a less brilliant rôle in the world than that for which Nature had evidently designed you. But such sentiments as these were not allied to a single thought that should have roused the suspicions, or excited the jealousy, of the most narrow-minded;—even of Mr. Tomkins. There has nothing passed between us—I have not breathed a whisper in your ear, incompatible with the profoundest admiration, the sincerest friendship. The mandate of your husband may banish me from your society, but it is not powerful enough to tear from my heart its most cherished sentiments. My attachment requires not the aliment of hope. A smile from you was all it fed on, and it can perish only with myself.

“ If Mr. Tomkins had had such consideration for your happiness as ought ever to regulate his actions, he would hardly have pursued the course he has done. He would have listened to the dictates of prudence rather than of passion. He has taken a step which must inevitably

lower his wife in the estimation of that public whose opinion he appears to value so highly. He has proved that he dares to doubt, to distrust her ;—that he seeks security in adopting certain arbitrary measures, not in her love or honour. Can anything be more injudicious?—more degrading—more injurious—to a high-minded woman, whose actual superiority has rendered her the mark for the hundred tongues of scandal? It is this consideration which afflicts me even more than the privation of your society? Oh, that I could speak to you, my dear, my lovely friend! Is such a thing absolutely beyond the compass of possibility? Shall you not ride out in the morning, and what should prevent your turning your horse's head towards the hill beyond the bridge? If, in pity to my sufferings, you think this can be effected, send merely '*salam*' * by the bearer, who may be trusted."

There was no signature.

The heart of Harriet palpitated violently.

* Equivalent to "give my compliments," and constantly used amongst the English in India.

A thousand contending emotions agitated it,—fear, indignation, doubt, love. The latter prevailed. The significant salam was sent, and she felt as if commencing a new career.

Did it promise happiness? Alas, she shrank from asking the question of her own heart.

END OF VOL. I.

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